虹色蘋楸

④

安達充

MITSURU ADACHI

★前情提要★

這是發生在未來宇宙中的古老傳說。在一個類似地球的星球上有個名爲江戶的地方，有七個同父異母的兄弟就在江戶龍神堀的大雜院中，過著幸福快樂的日子。

七兄弟的父親是江戶城城主，母親們則全都逝世了。

現在，七兄弟中除了正在四處旅行的次男—麻次郎之外，其餘六人都打算一起去爲七位母親掃墓，順便探訪父親的下落，而決定在梅雨季節時離開江戶。

一行人首先來到五男—陳皮的故鄉。正在享受原野恬靜怡然的景色時，突然有隻機械狗出現了！

虹色辣椒 ❹ 目 次

陳皮之母之墓……5
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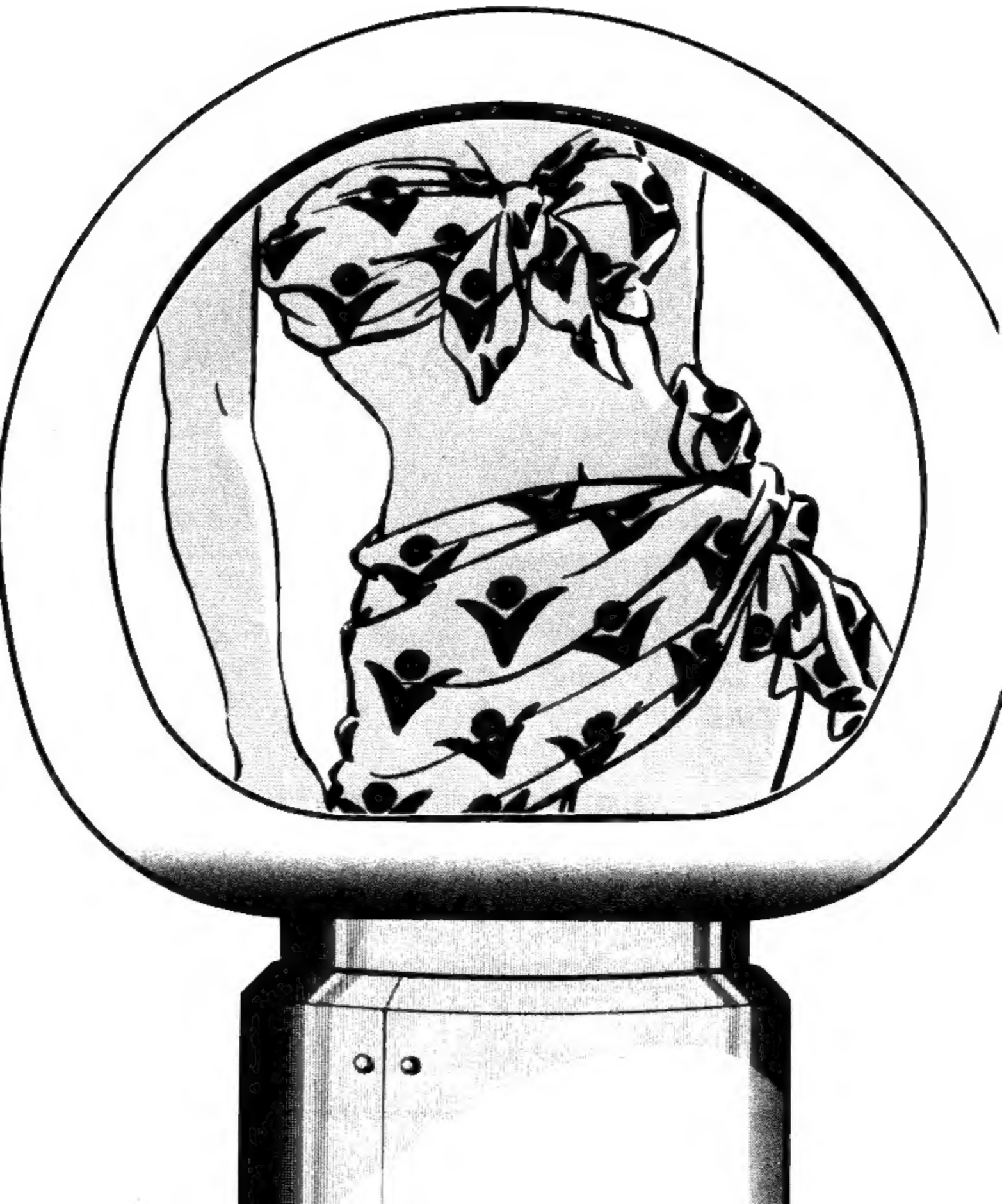
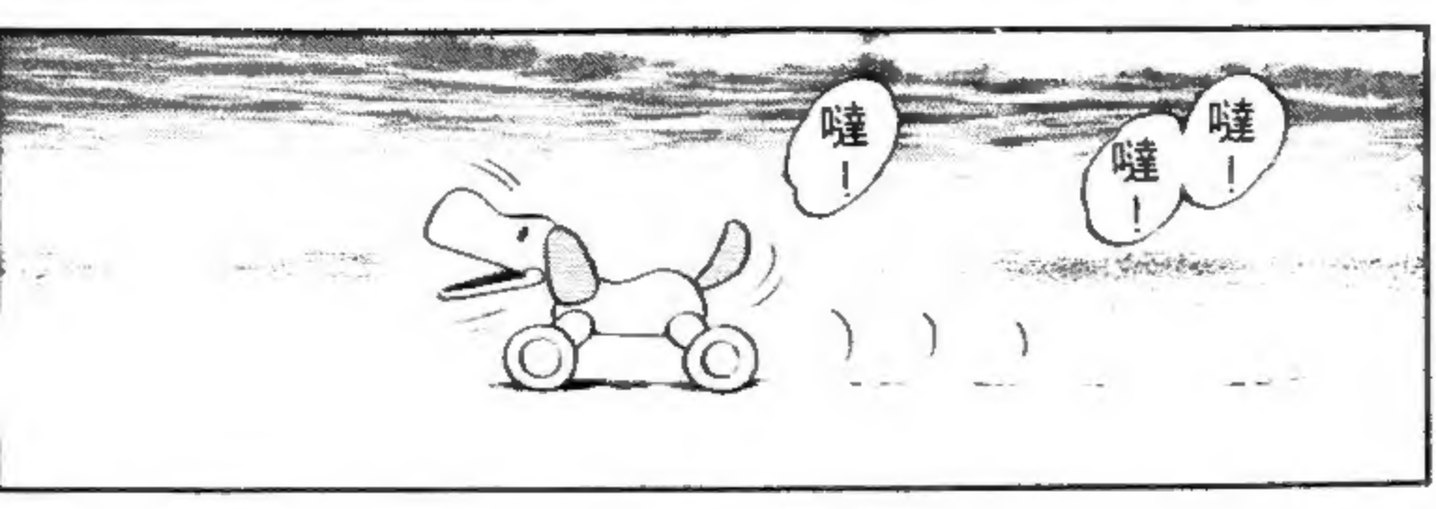
■ 安達充 ■

THE GRAVE OF CHINPJ'S MOTHER



噠！
噠！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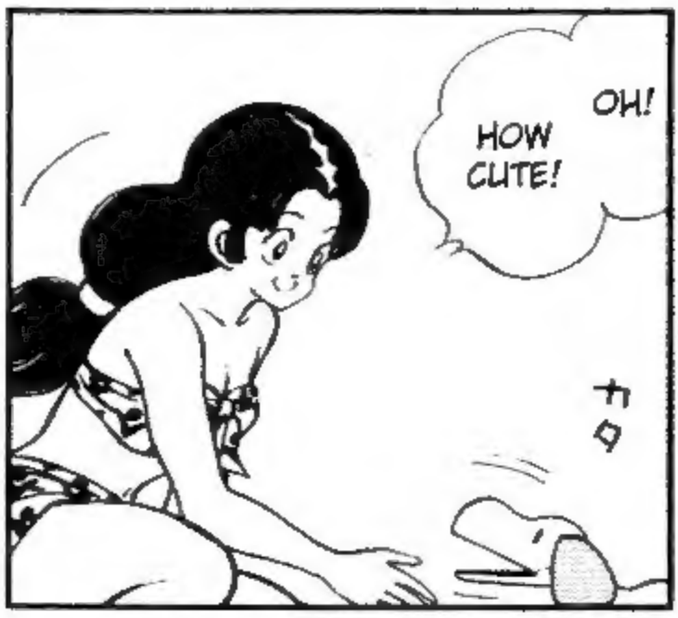
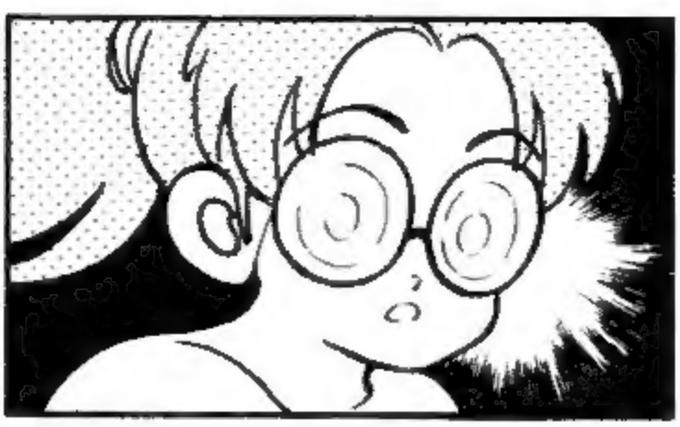
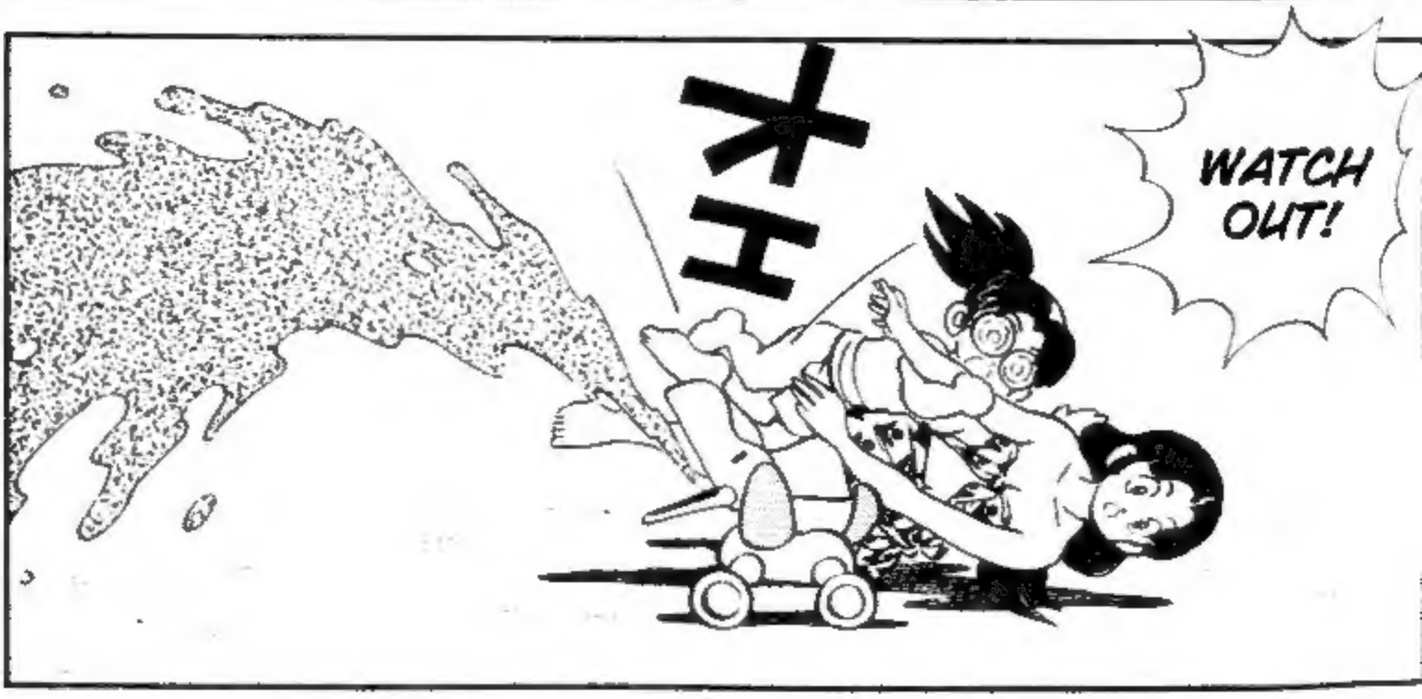

OH!
HOW CUTE!
ㄎㄛ



噠！
噠！
噠！

十ㄇ

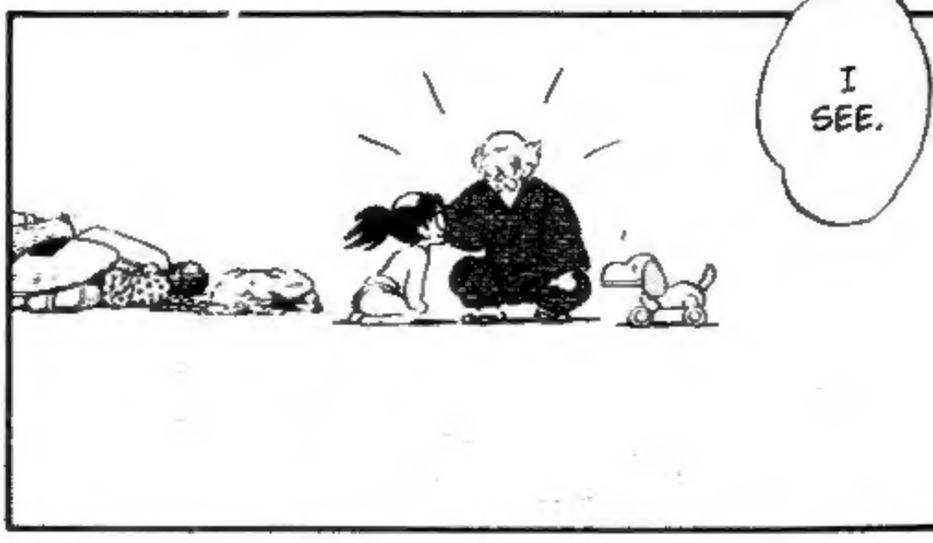

WATCH OUT!
十ㄐㄐ

HAHAH!
CHINPI, I SEE YOU STILL REMEMBER!
THIS DOG...
SENSEI!!

SENSEI?

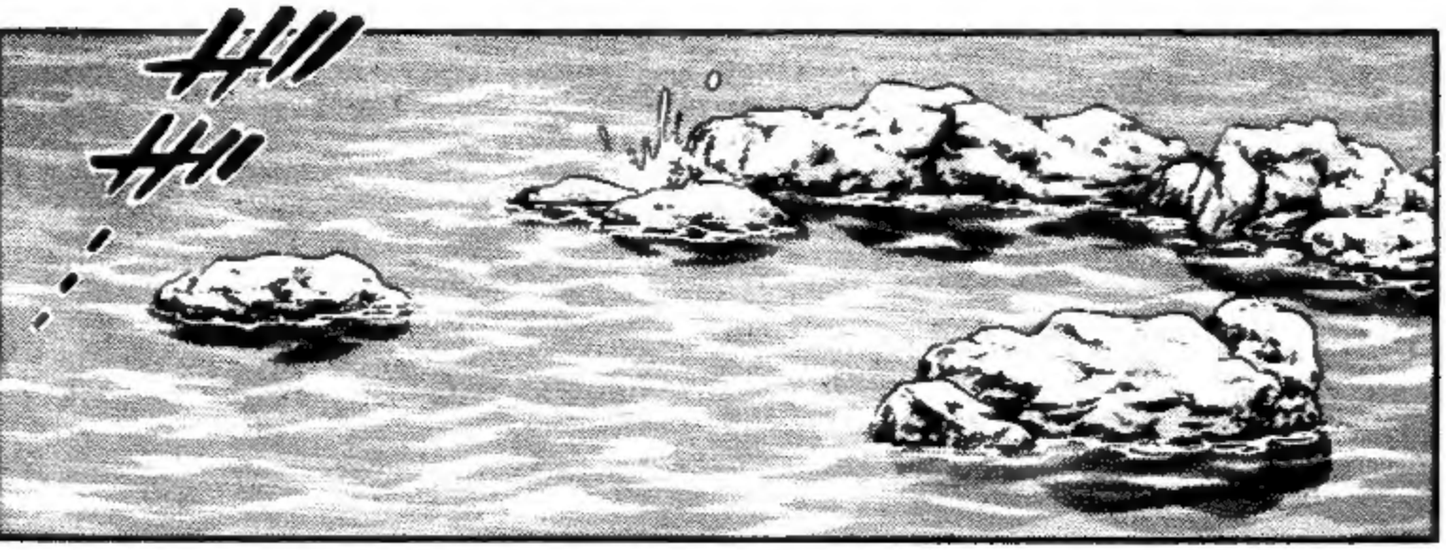
APPARENTLY, HE WAS ONE OF CHINPI'S NEIGHBORS YEARS AGO. AN OLD INVENTOR.
YEP.

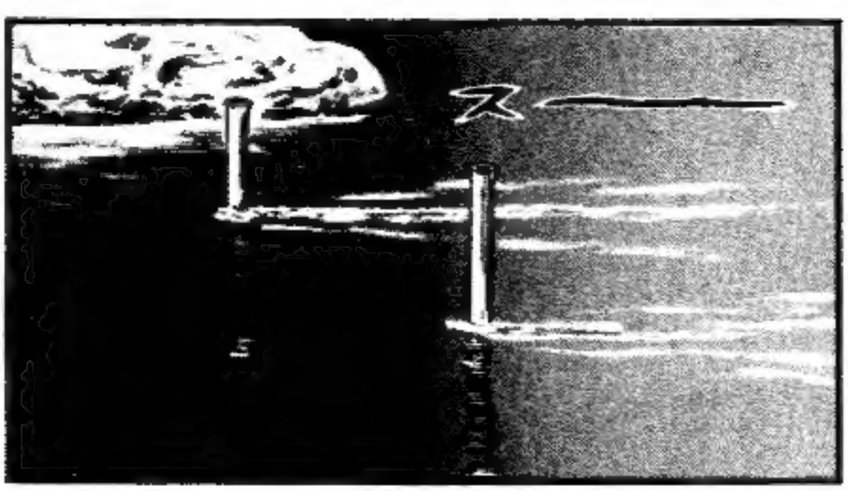
EH? WHERE'S SAN-SHOU?
HUH?

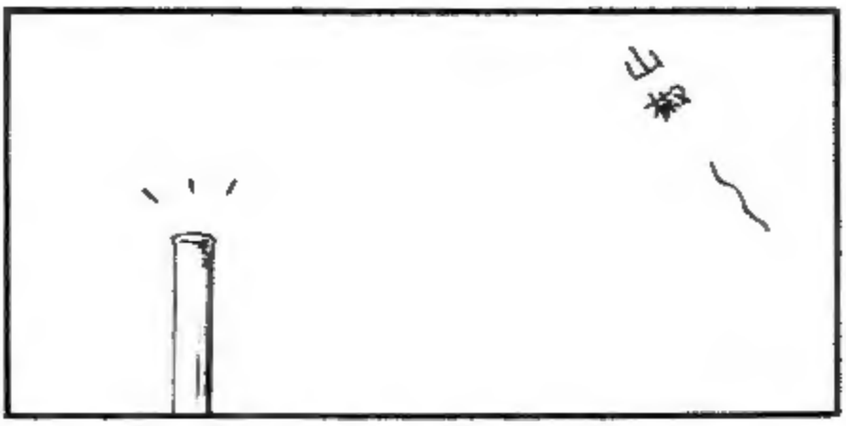

I SEE.

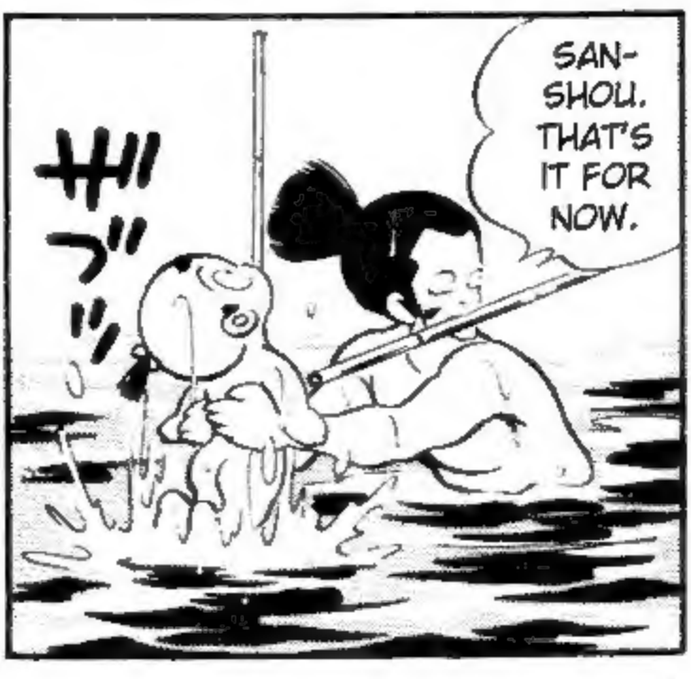
HELP!
OH!
HEY GIRLS!

Scan By Join

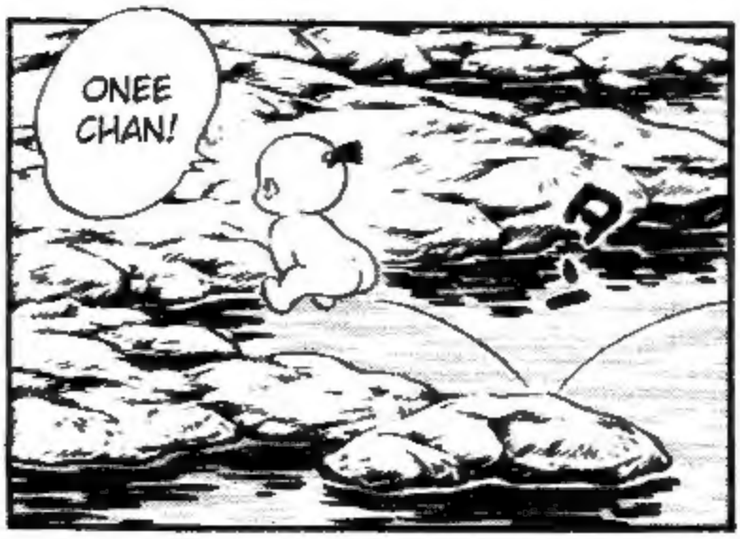


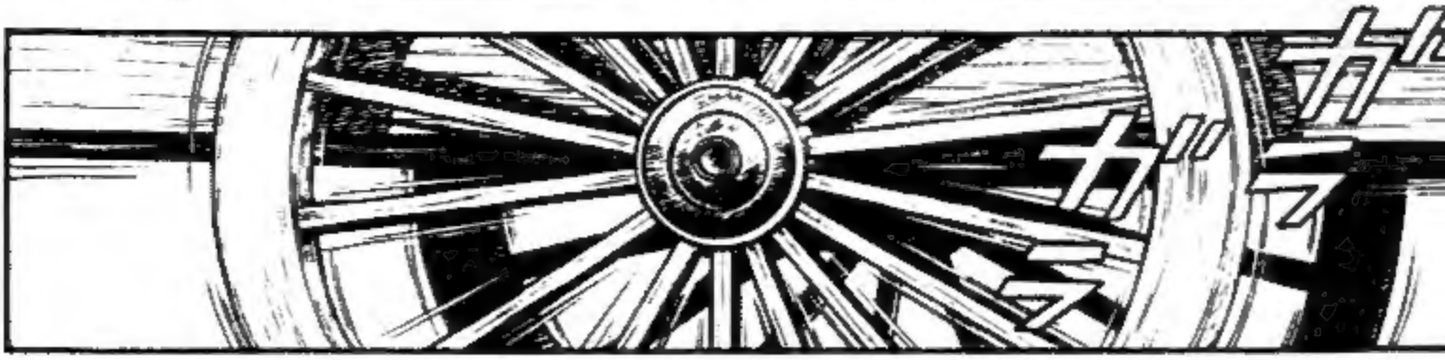






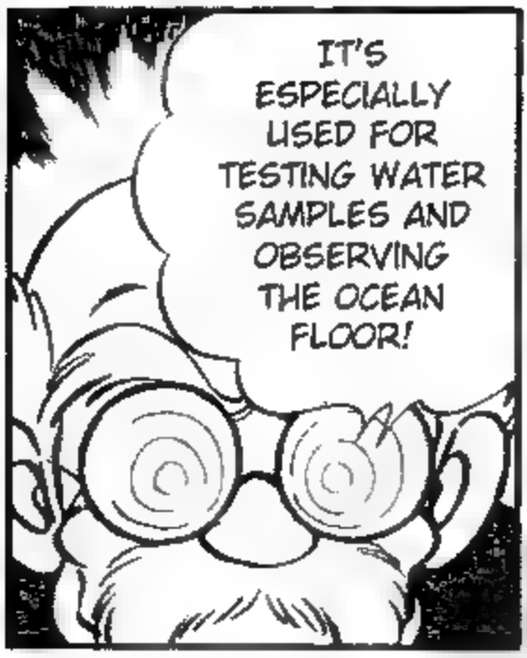
—SANSHOU

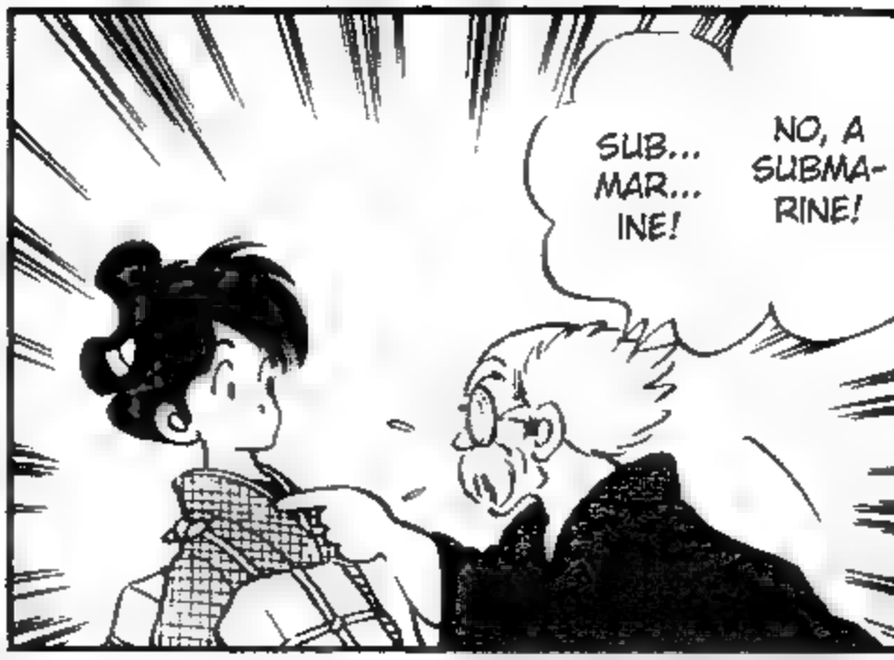

ONEE CHAN!

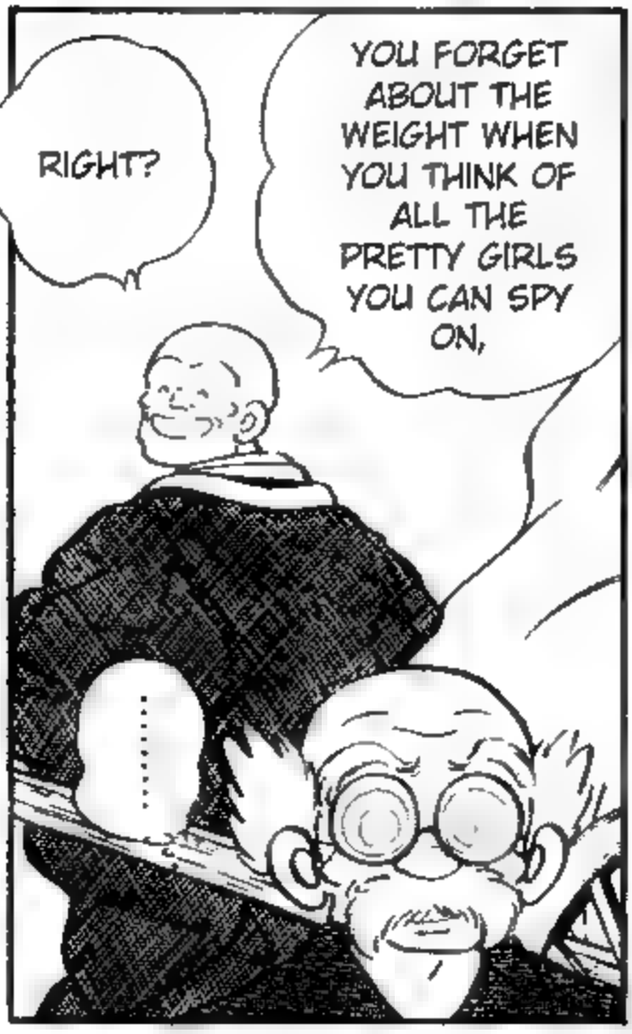

ガラガラ

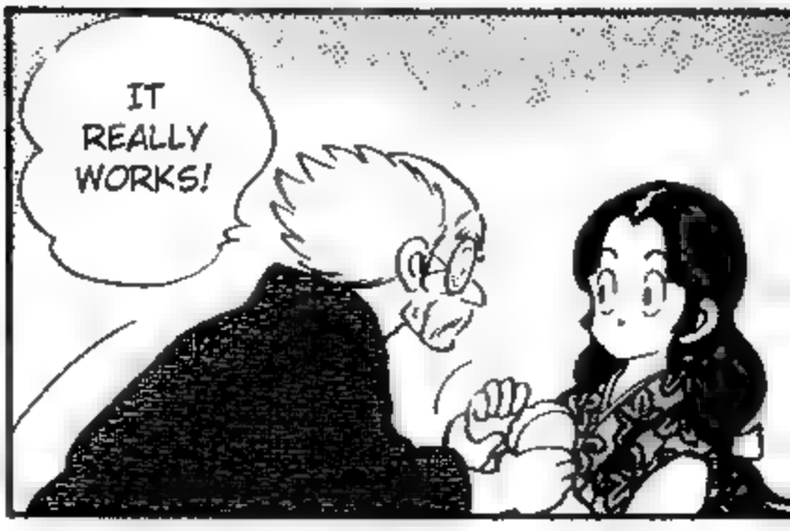
SENSEI, WHAT IS THIS?
ガラガラ
HUH? THIS THING?

IT'S MY PROUDEST INVENTION!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS?
A BULKY TURTLE!

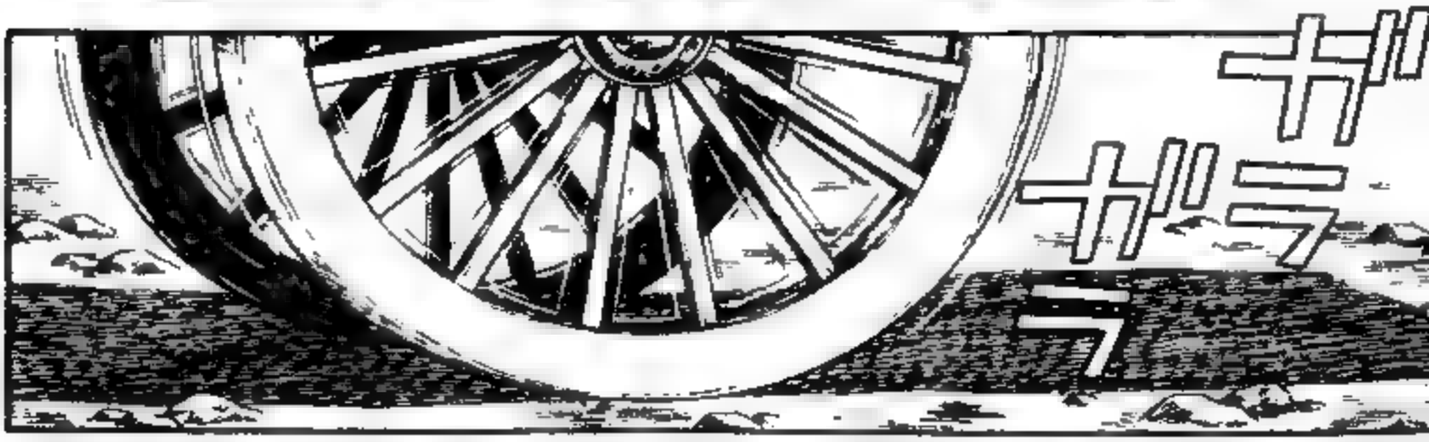

IT'S ESPECIALLY USED FOR TESTING WATER SAMPLES AND OBSERVING THE OCEAN FLOOR!


SUB... MAR... INE!
NO, A SUBMA-RINE!


RIGHT?
YOU FORGET ABOUT THE WEIGHT WHEN YOU THINK OF ALL THE PRETTY GIRLS YOU CAN SPY ON,
.....


IT REALLY WORKS!

AREN'T YOU A BIT OLD TO BE LUGGING IT AROUND, THOUGH?

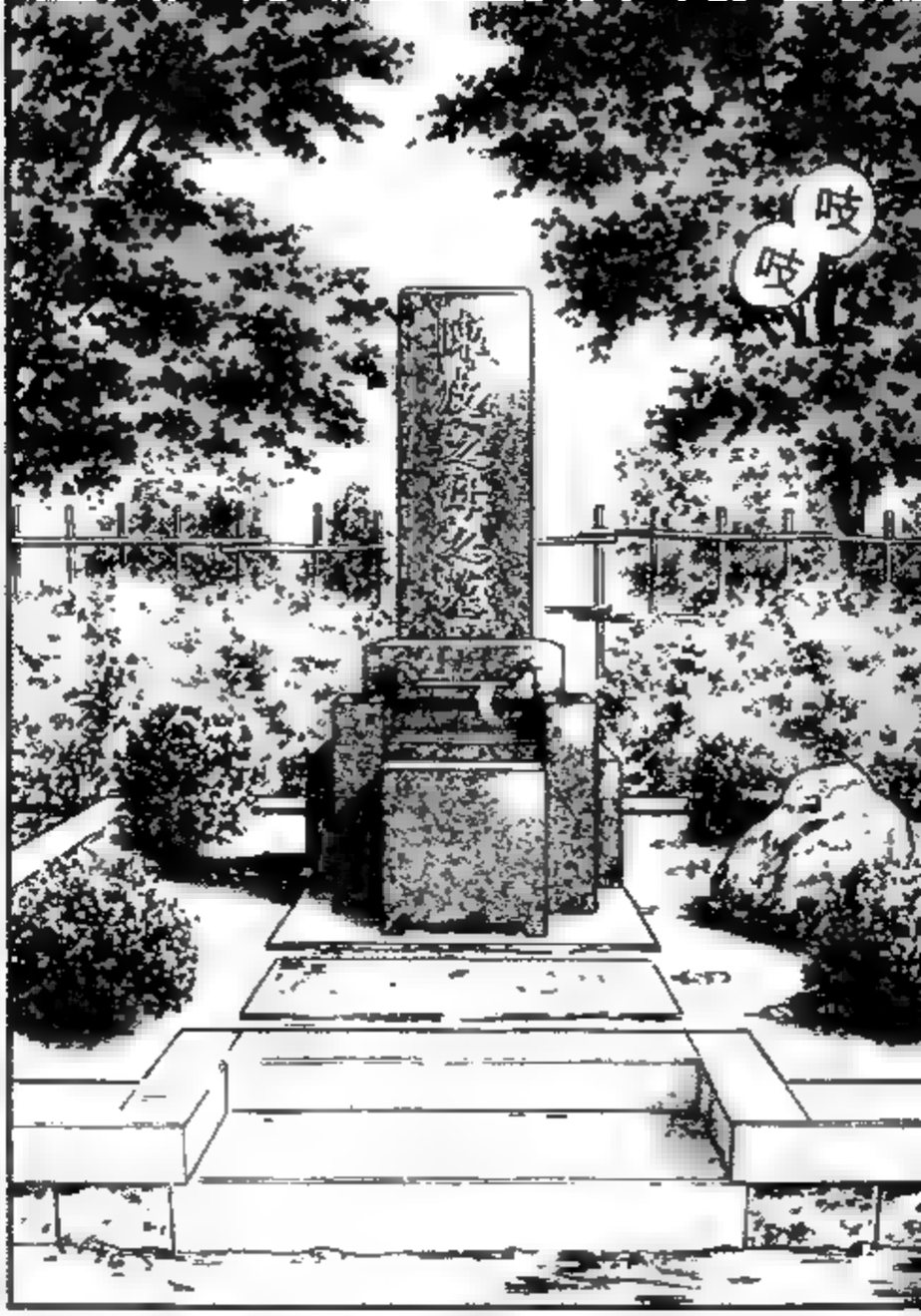

ガラ
ガラ

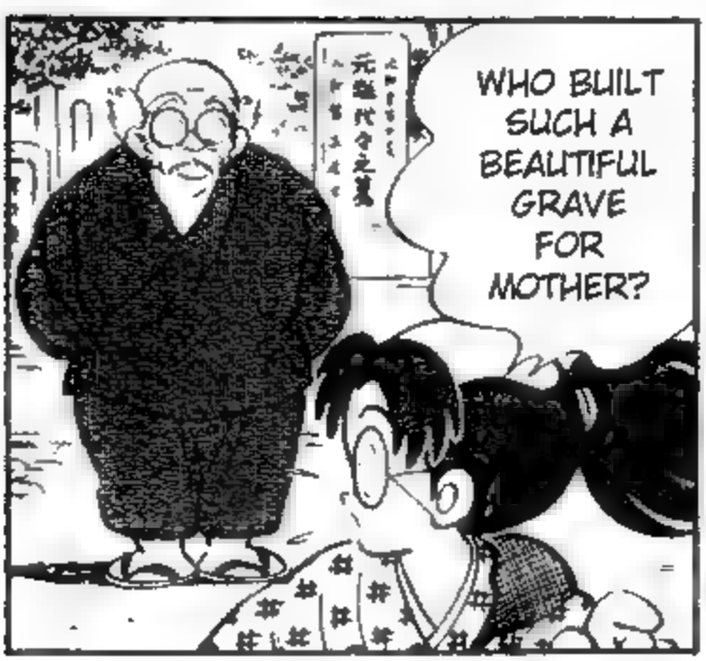
温泉神

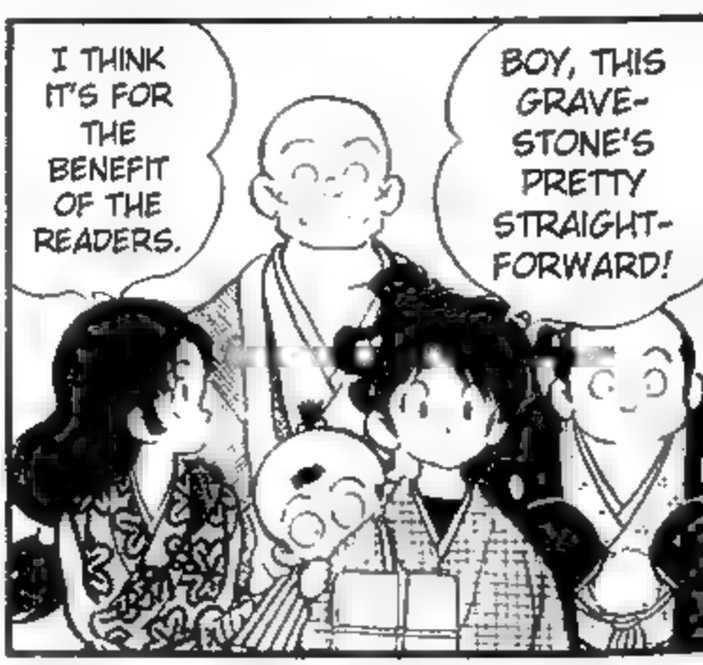
chirp
chirp
chirp

陳皮之母之墓

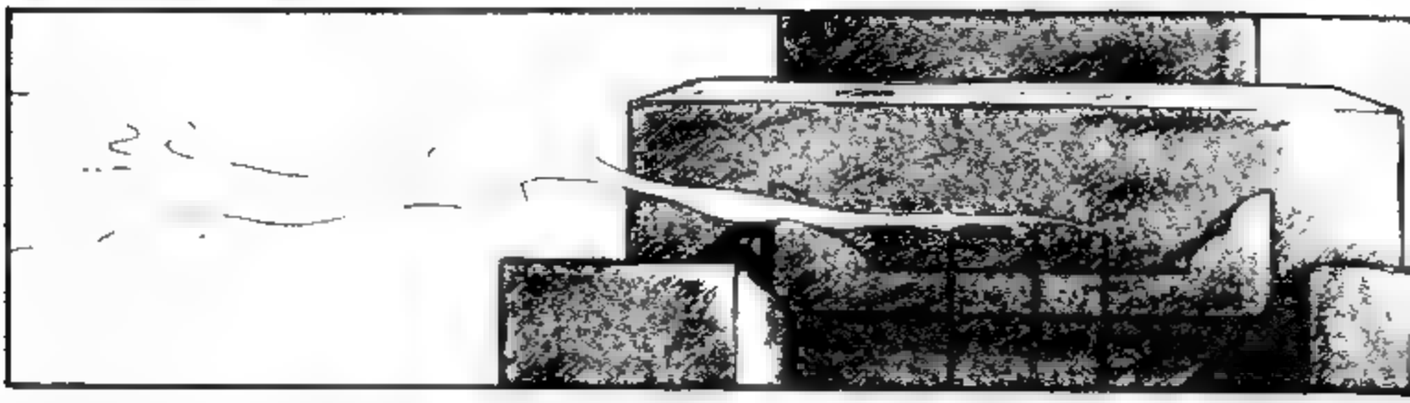
GRAVE OF CHINPI'S MOTHER

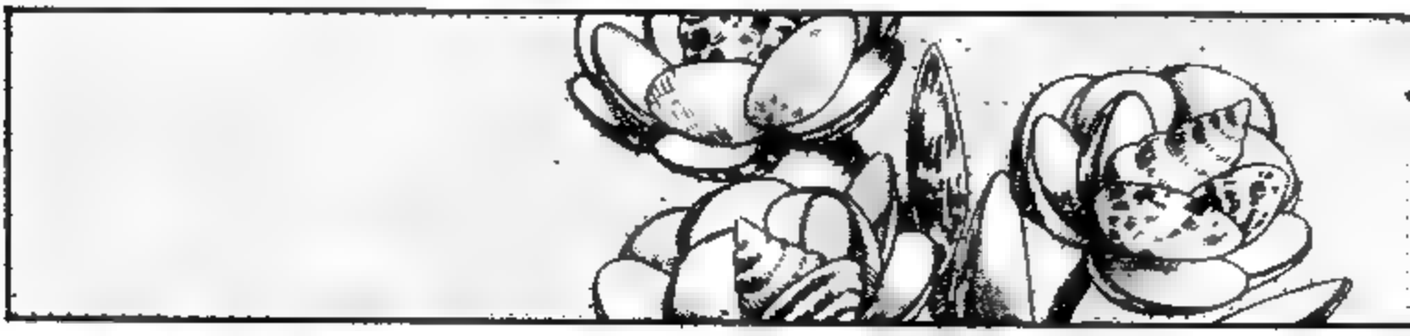




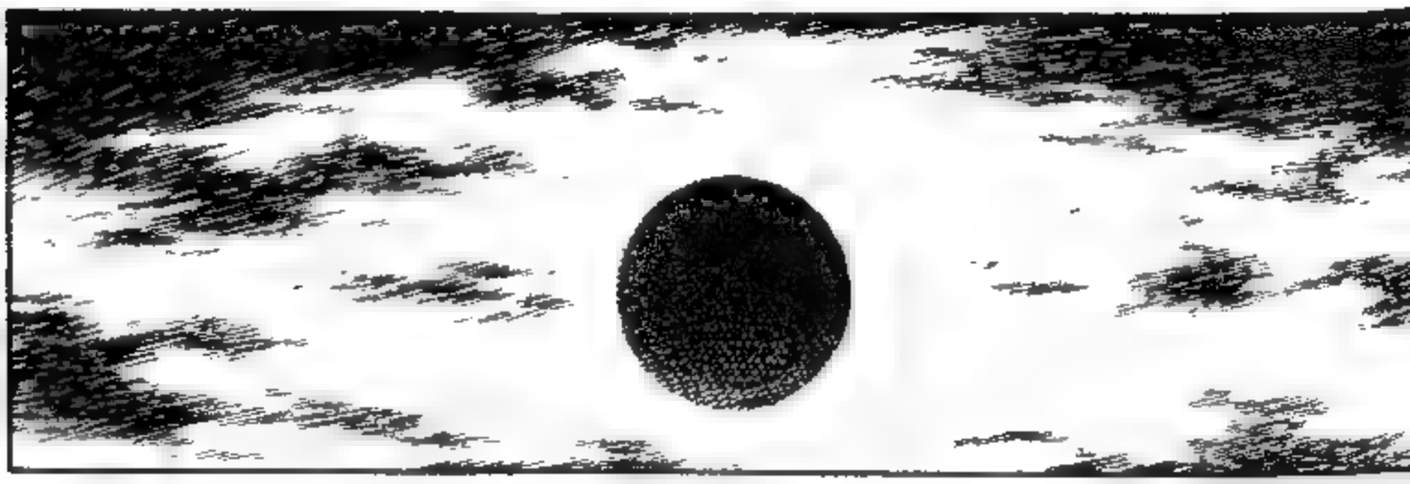


THIS WAS RIGHT AFTER YOU REACHED EDO.
SOMEONE SNEAKED INTO THE LOCAL SHRINE WITHOUT WAKING THE MONK AND LEFT MONEY AND A NOTE.
I DON'T KNOW EITHER.
THE MONK WAS A STRONG MARTIAL ARTIST...
VERY LIKELY.
A FRIEND OF OUR FATHER'S?
AND ...
THIS "FRIEND" IS NO NORMAL BEING!
SINCE HE DIDN'T DETECT ANYTHING,
煙草
哈啾！





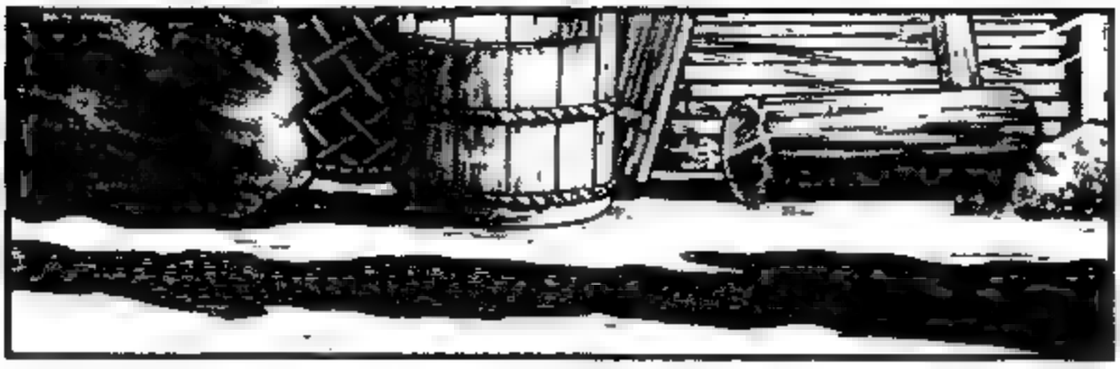
哎—
哎—



FIRE-FLIES!
PRETTY, NO?
THIS PLACE IS FAMOUS FOR ITS FIREFLIES!
I SEE!

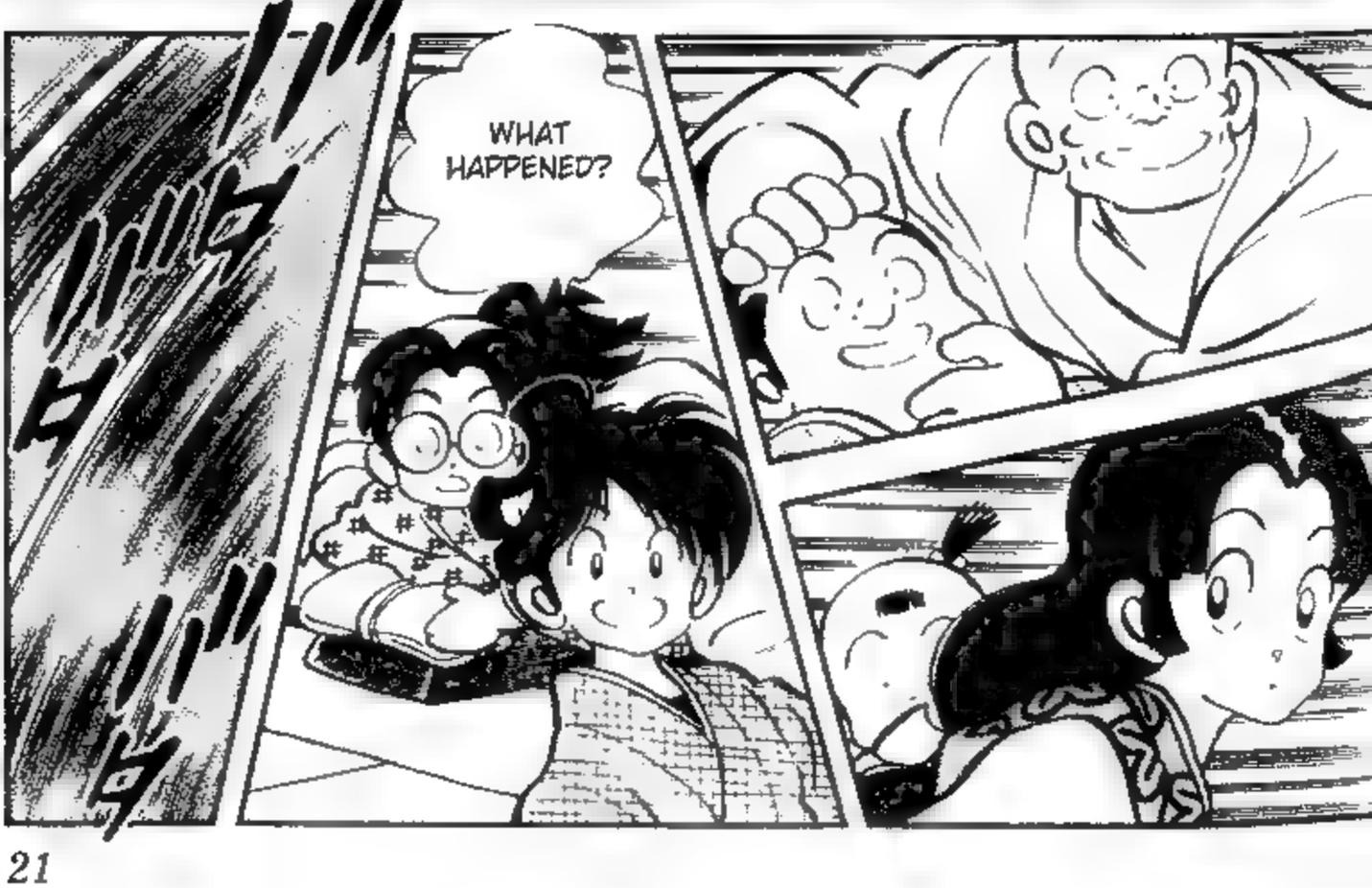
IT'S A TEAR.
THERE'S A FIREFLY ON YOUR EYE.
YOU'RE TOO HONEST.

トントン カンテン
トントン カンテン
ALL THIS COMMO-TION!
WHAT'S THAT OLD INVENTOR DOING AT THIS TIME OF
トントン カンテン



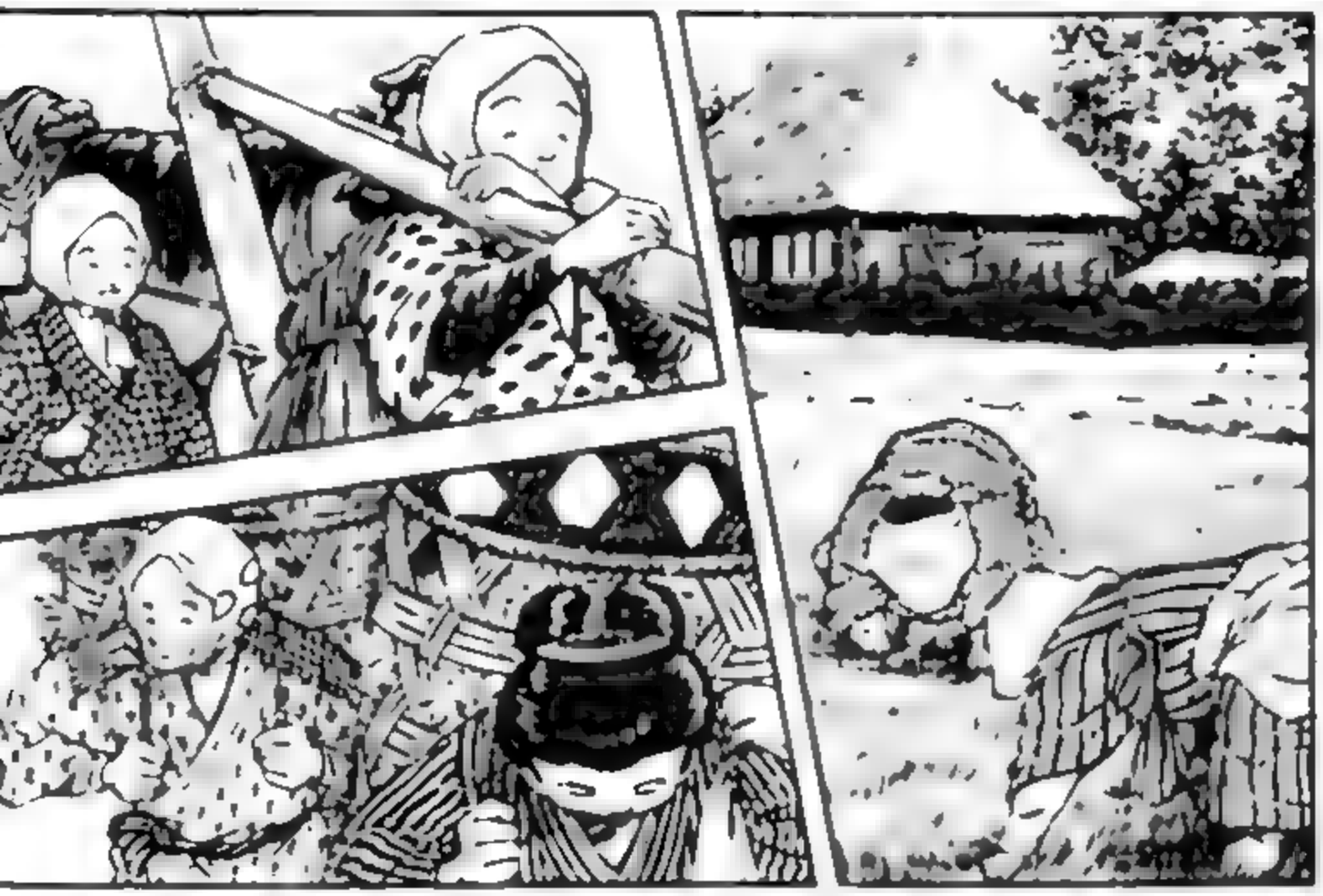
吱
吱

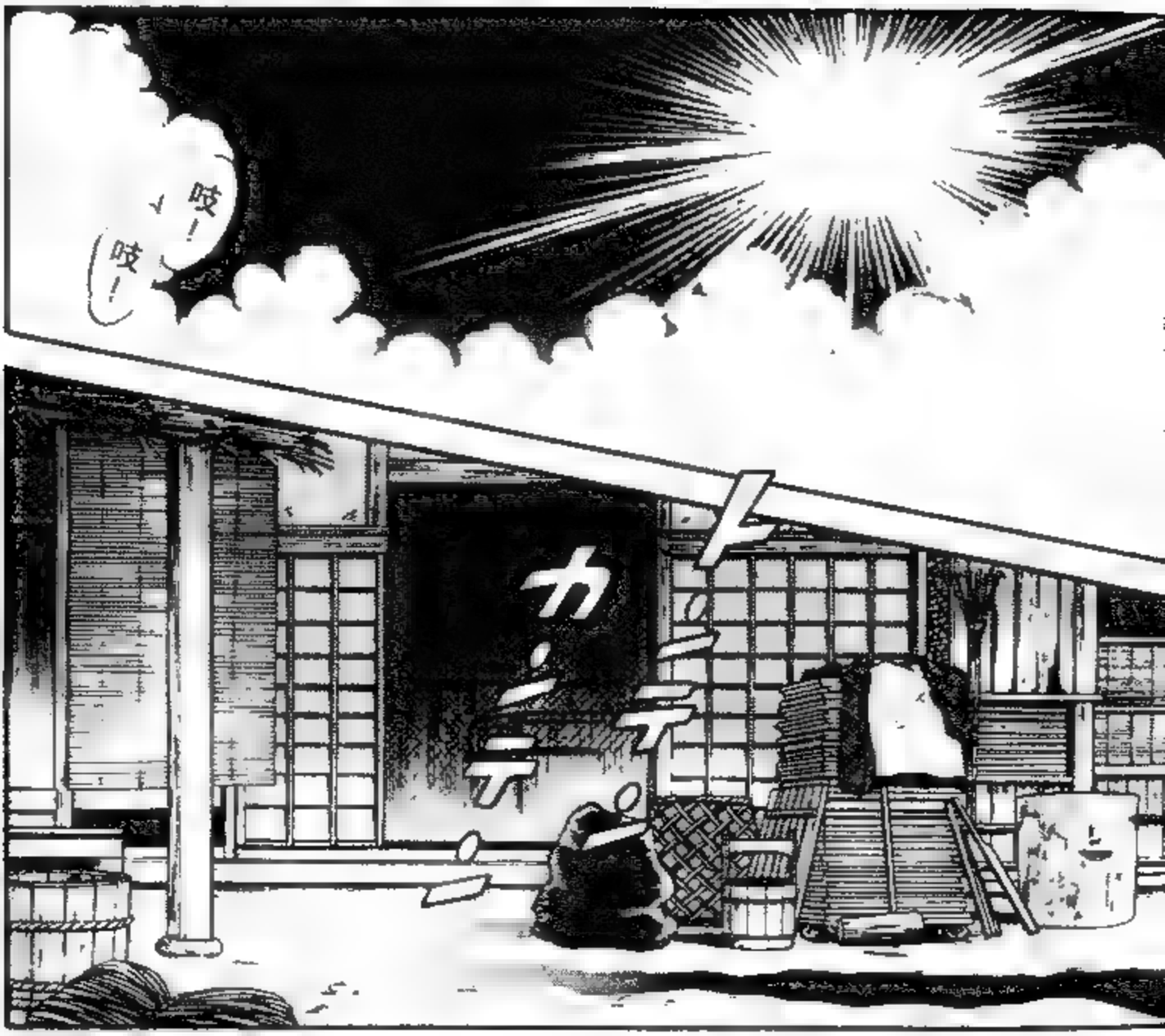
咻咻


WHAT HAPPENED?

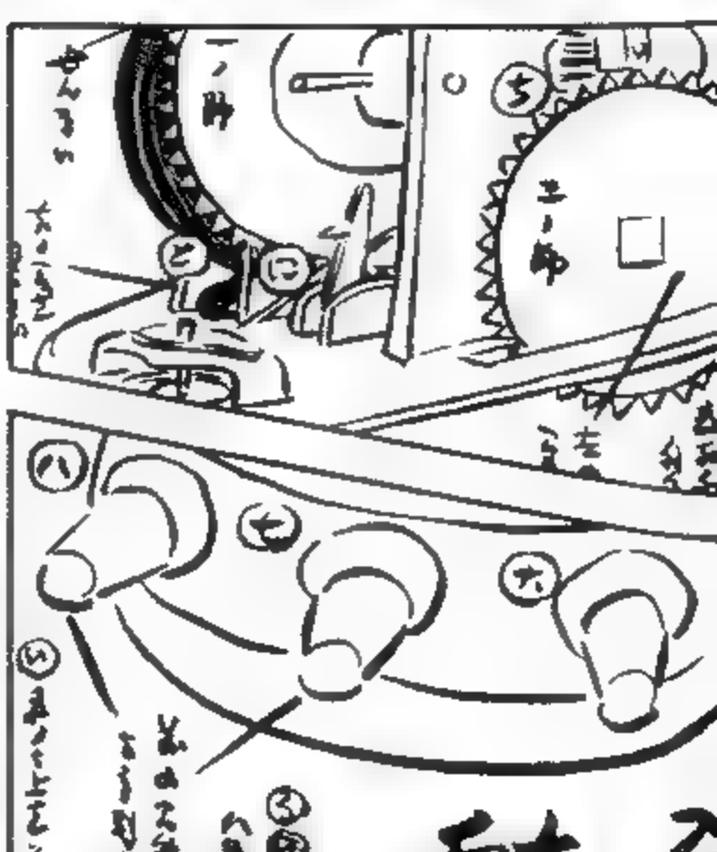
WHAT IS IT, SENSEI?
I DID IT!
HEH... SURPRISED, EH?
LET ME SHOW YOU...
...HOW TO MAKE A PILE OF JUNK.

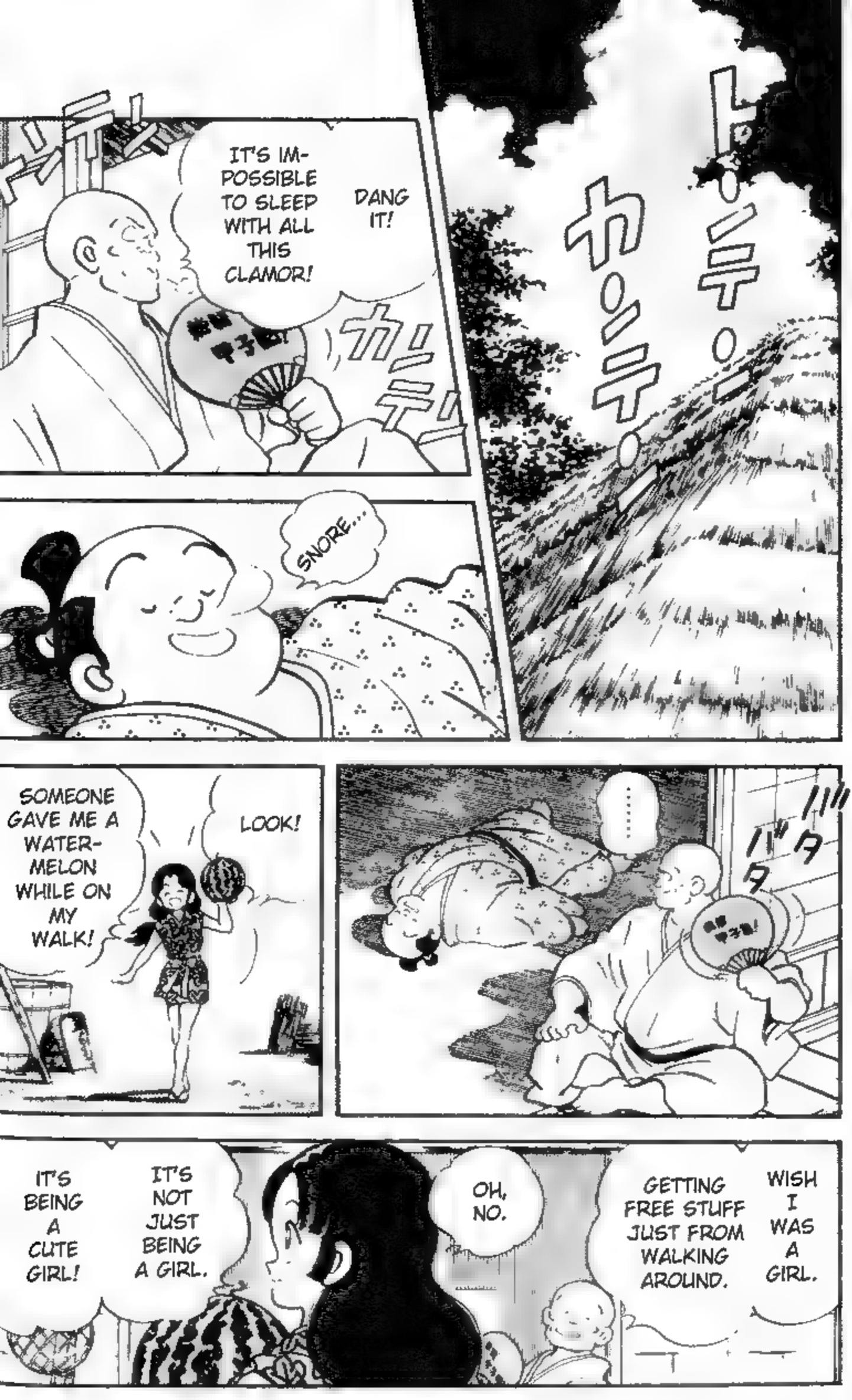
MAGIC DUST



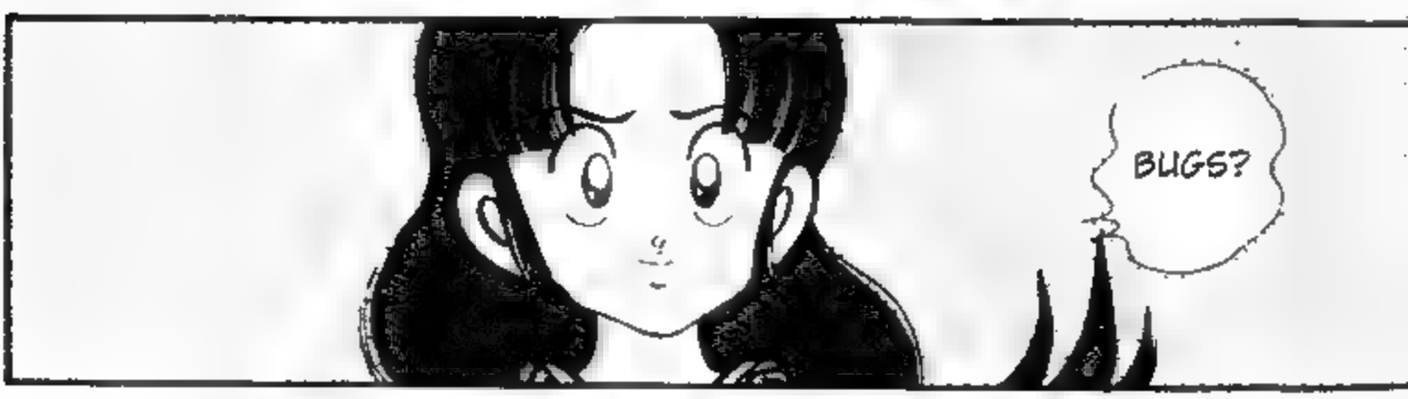

吱！
吱！
カーテ

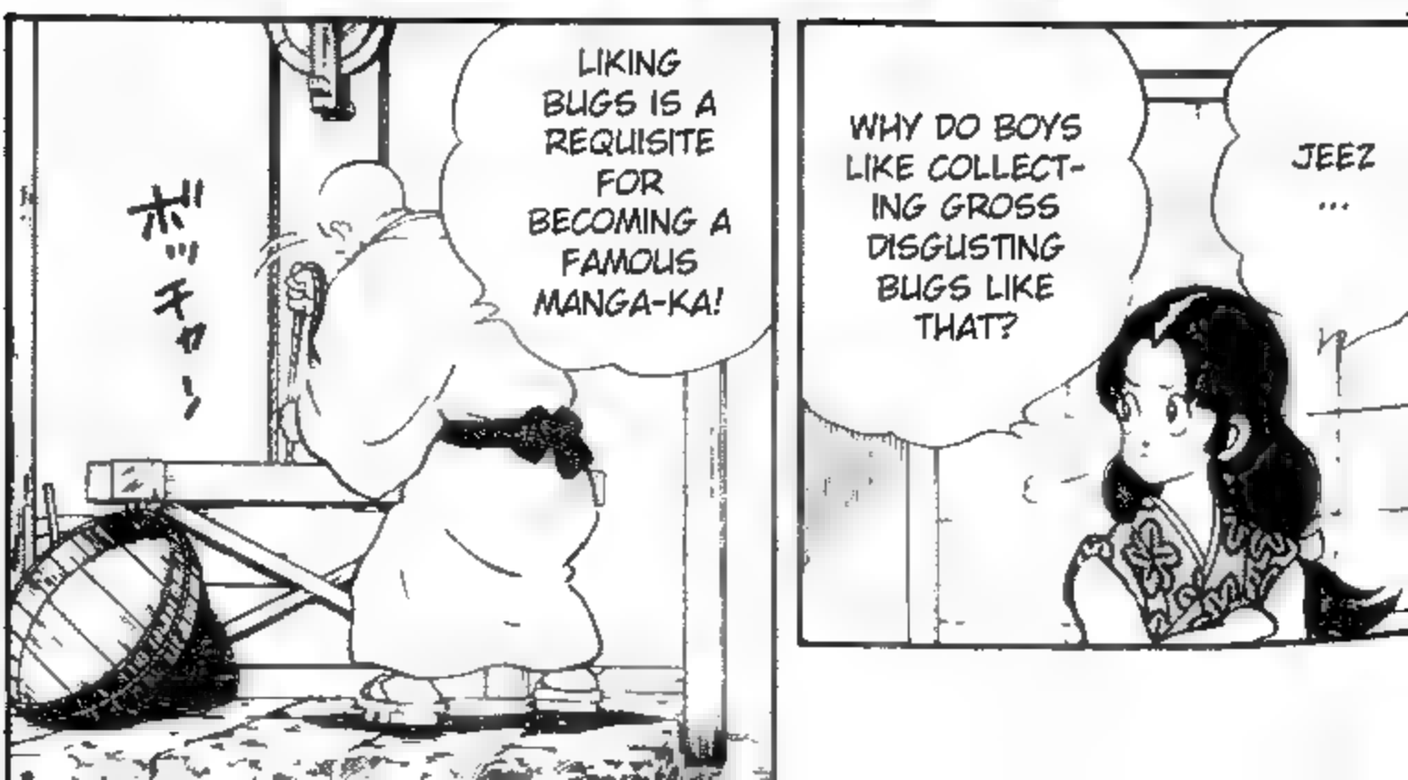
トントン
トントン



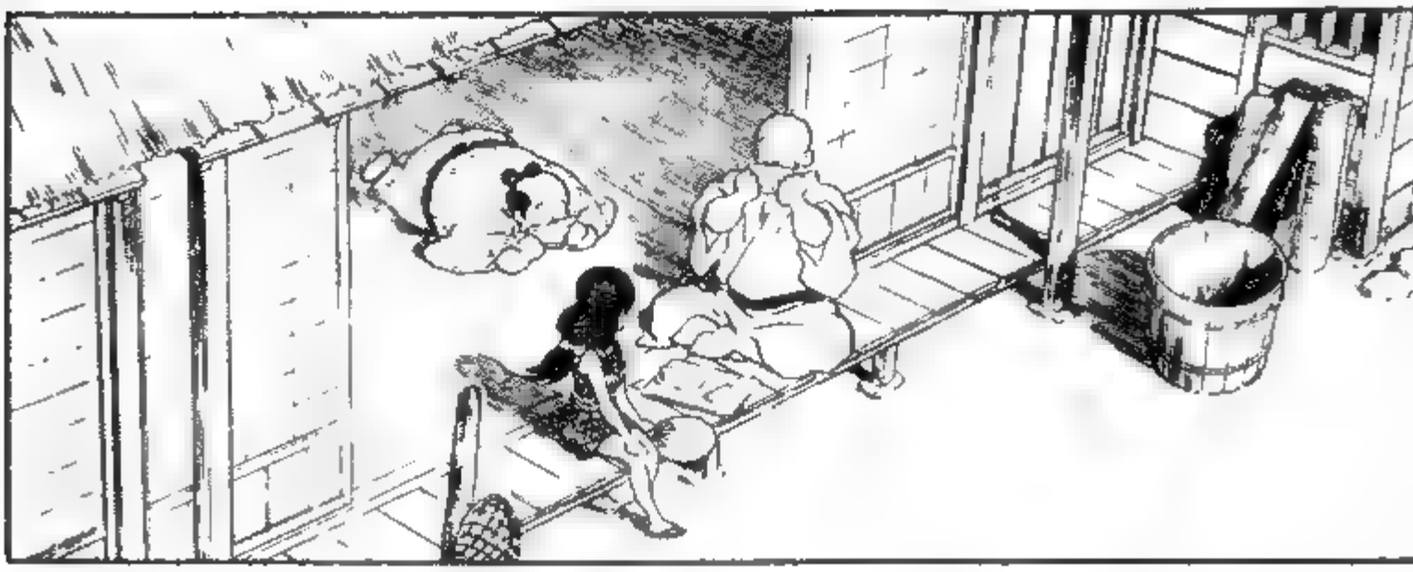

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO SLEEP WITH ALL THIS CLAMOR!
DANG IT!
SNORE...
SOMEONE GAVE ME A WATERMELON WHILE ON MY WALK!
LOOK!
IT'S BEING A CUTE GIRL!
IT'S NOT JUST BEING A GIRL.
OH, NO.
GETTING FREE STUFF JUST FROM WALKING AROUND.
WISH I WAS A GIRL.

I WAS LOOKING FOR SAN-SHOU!
THEY WENT OUT TO-GETHER!
BUG CATCH-ING!
I'LL COOL IT IN THE WELL FOR YOU.
OF COUR SE!
SHICHIMI WENT OUT!

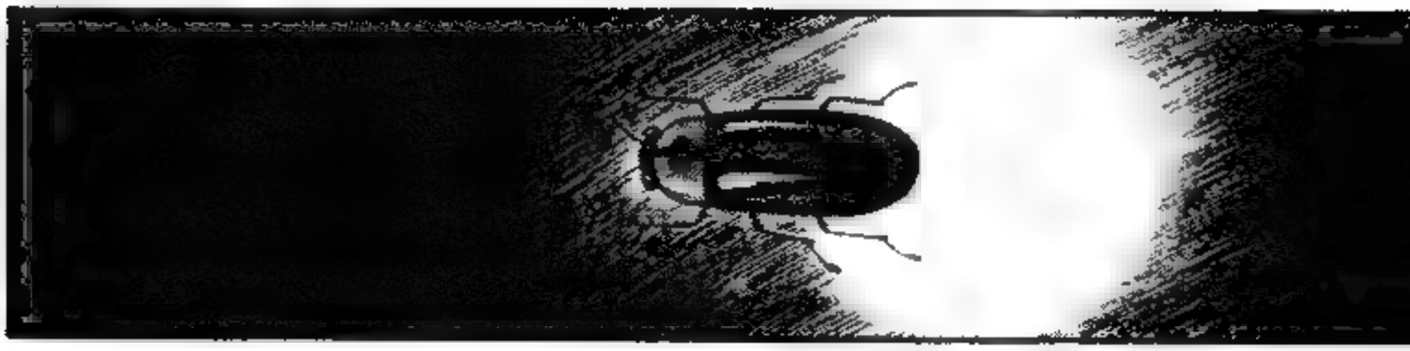

BUGS?

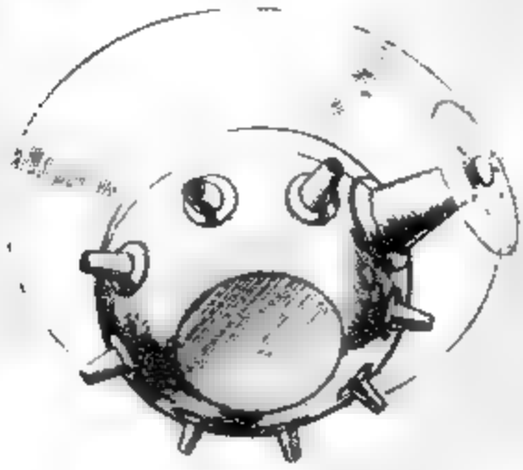

LIKING BUGS IS A REQUISITE FOR BECOMING A FAMOUS MANGA-KA!
ボッチャ～
WHY DO BOYS LIKE COLLECT-ING GROSS DISGUSTING BUGS LIKE THAT?
JEEZ ...

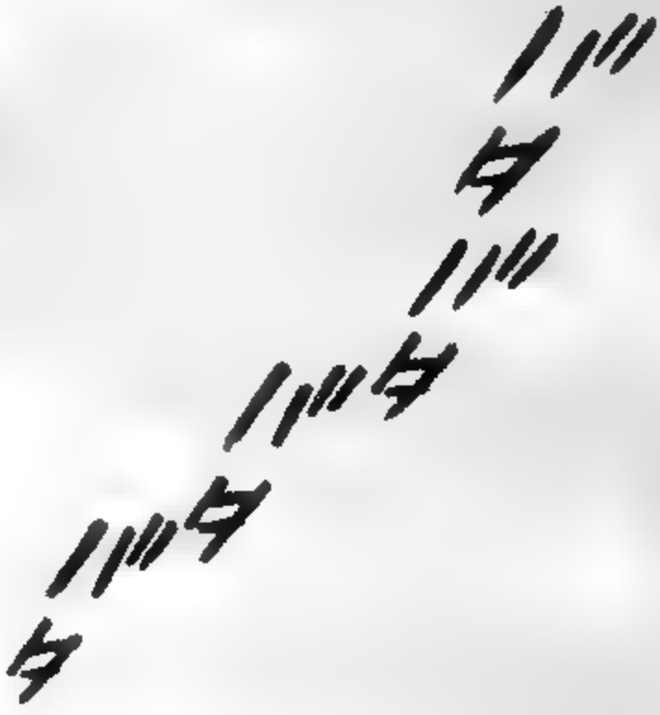
嗖！
嗖！
嗖！
嗖！

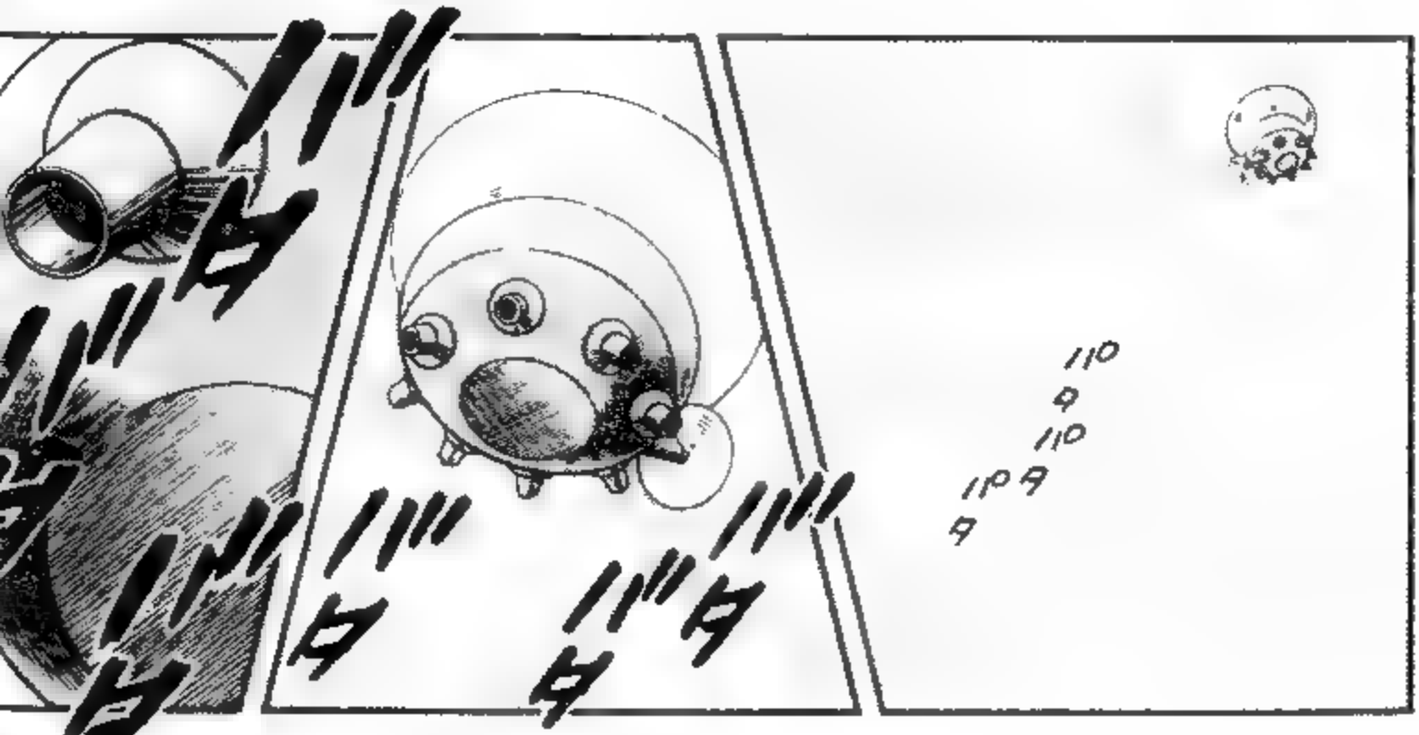


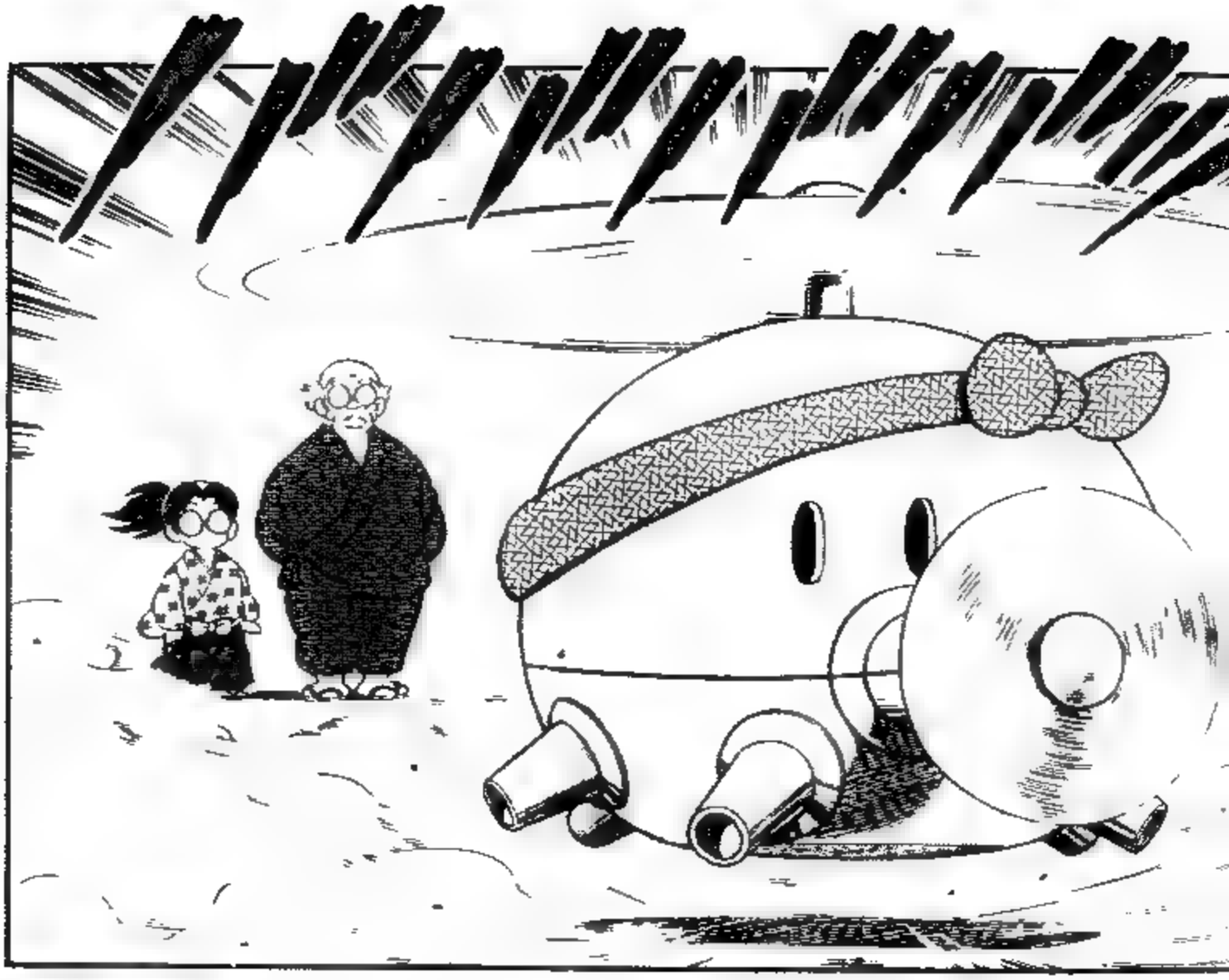
トーハトーハ
カーハトーハ
WOW!
SO PRETTY!
WOW!
SO PRETTY!
DON'T YOU KNOW THAT FIREFLIES ARE "BUGS" TOO?
KESHI-NIICHAN! CATCH ONE FOR ME!
WOMEN! CAN'T UNDER-STAND 'EM!





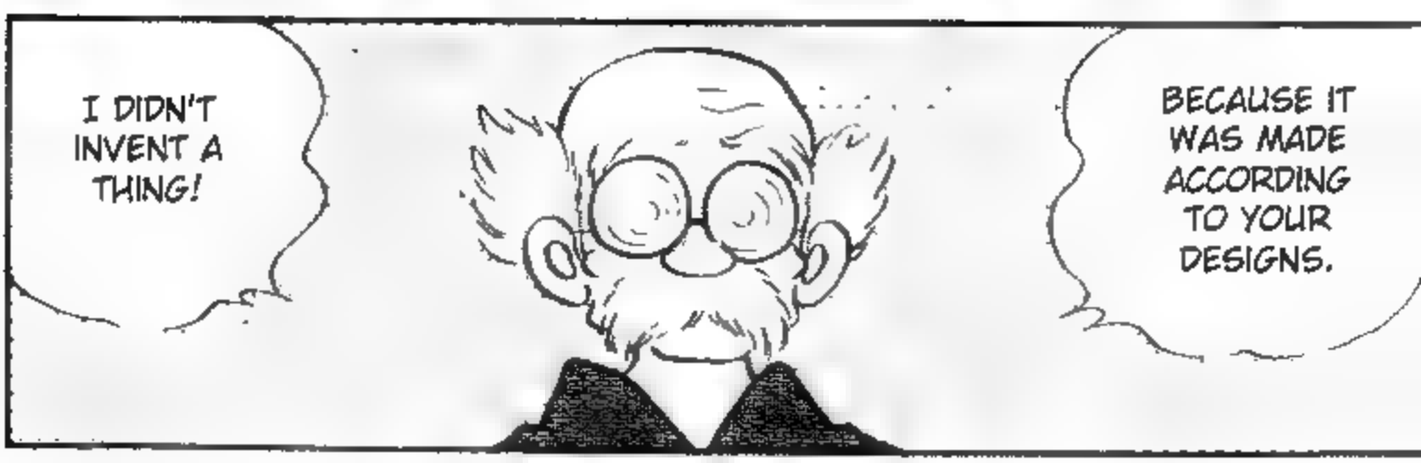


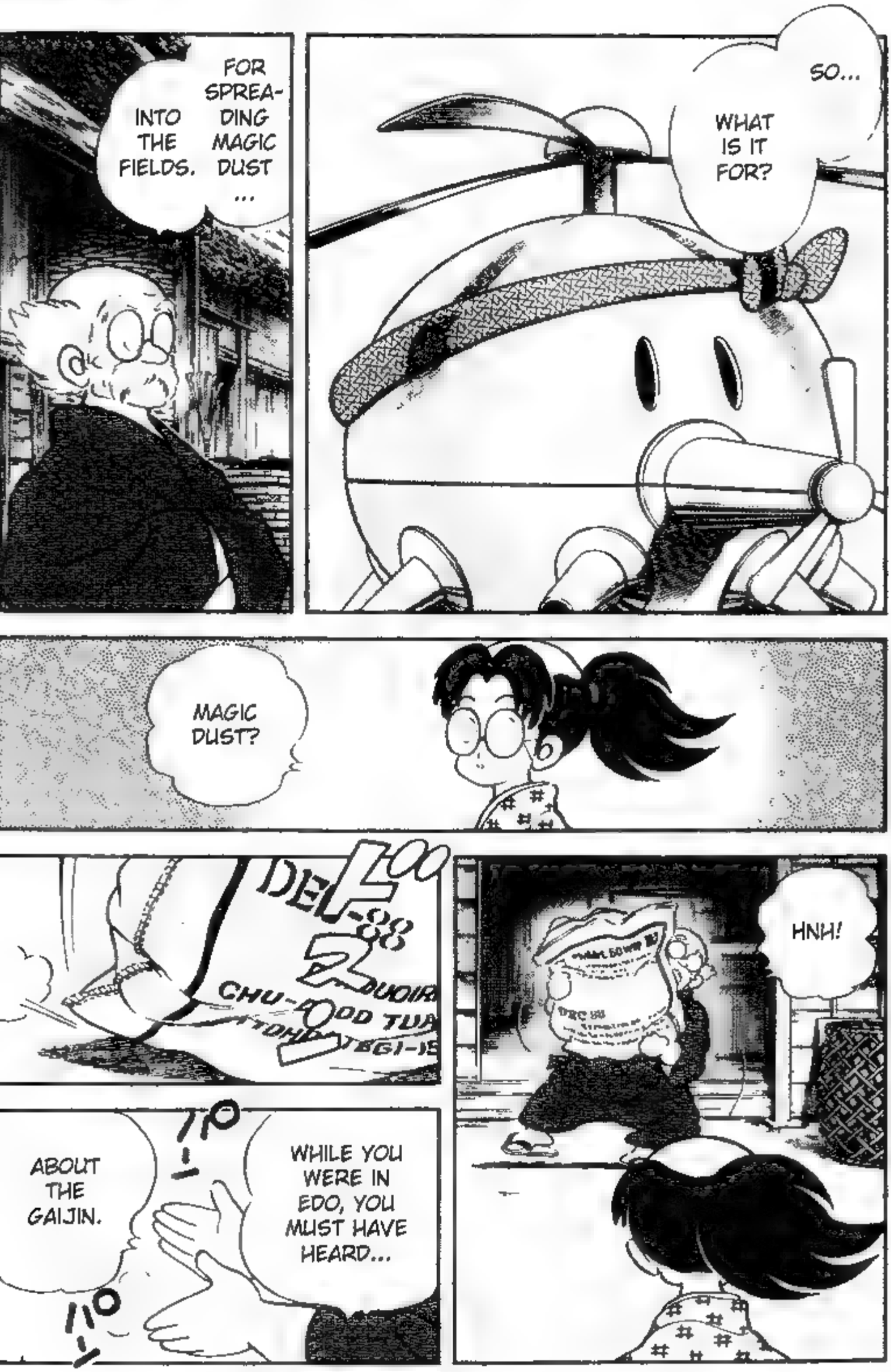




BUT, YOU DON'T LOOK TOO HAPPY...

IT WAS A BIG SUC-CESS.
NO.
DID IT FAIL?

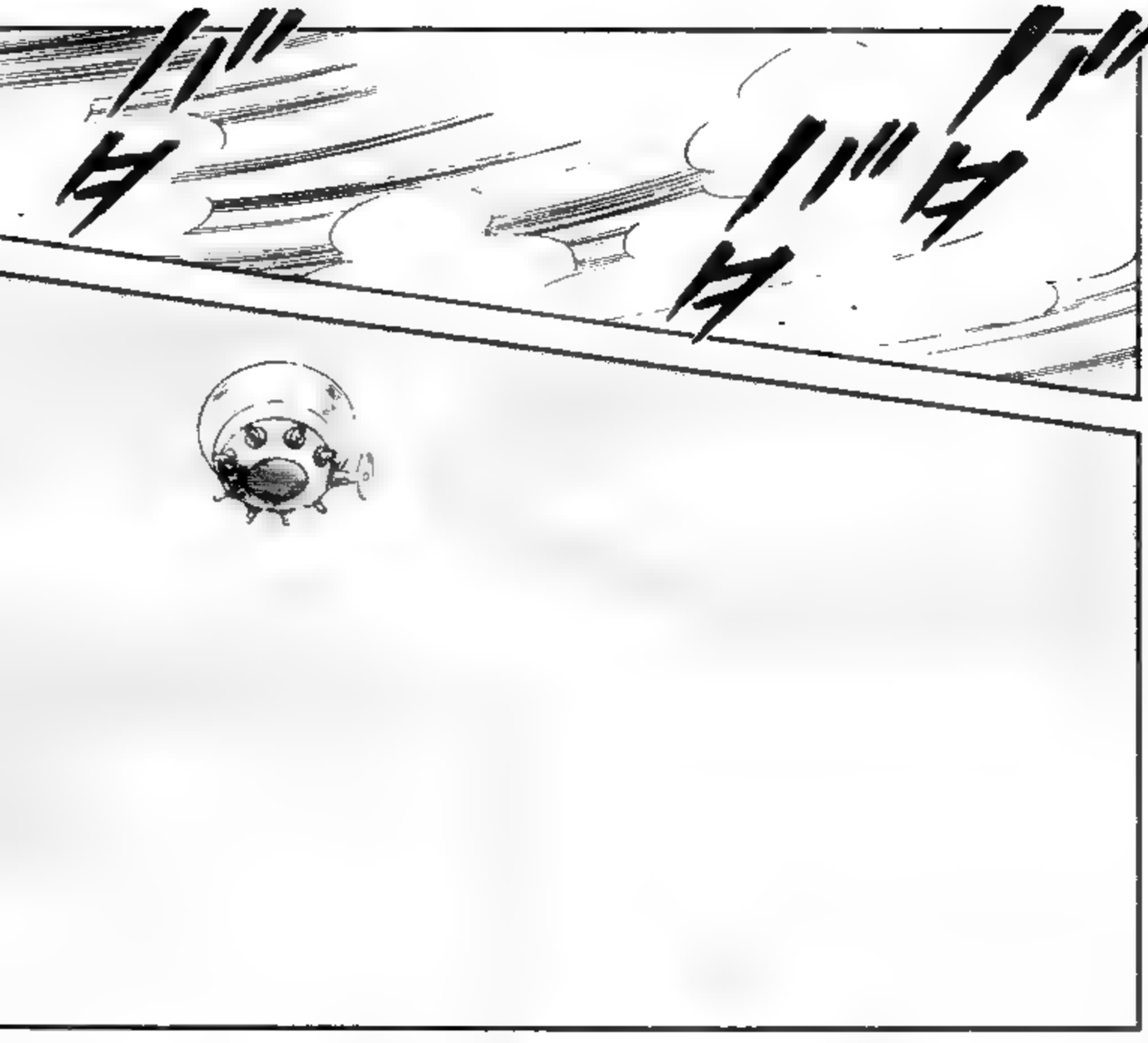

I DIDN'T INVENT A THING!
BECAUSE IT WAS MADE ACCORDING TO YOUR DESIGNS.


FOR SPREADING MAGIC DUST ...
INTO THE FIELDS.
SO...
WHAT IS IT FOR?
MAGIC DUST?
HNH!
WHILE YOU WERE IN EDO, YOU MUST HAVE HEARD...
ABOUT THE GAIJIN.

THEY MADE THIS.
NOHYAKU
DEC-88
HUH?
YEAH...
ENSURING A LARGE CROP EVERY YEAR!
MAKE WHEAT GROW FASTER,
IN A SHORT TIME, IT CAN GET RID OF PESTS AND WEEDS,

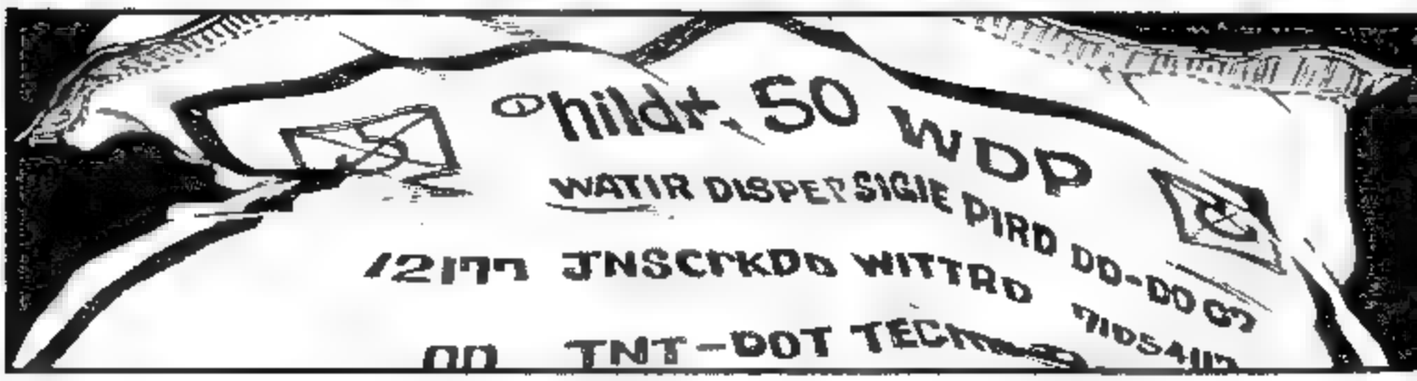
LET'S START THE EXPERI-MENT!

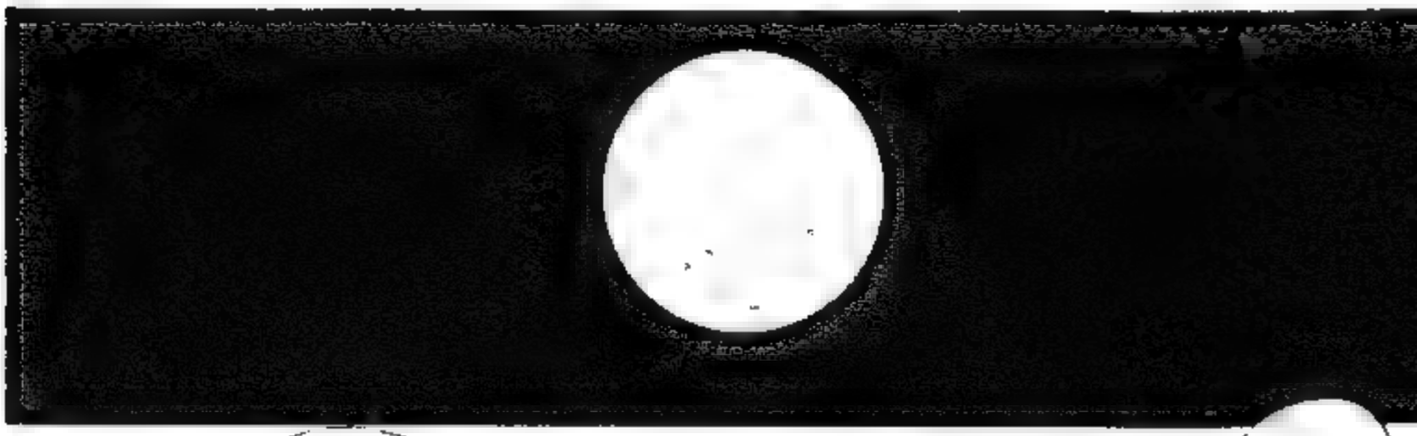
OUR MAYOR HAD TO PULL QUITE A FEW STRINGS TO GET THIS SACK!
SUPPOSEDLY, MANY REGIONS NEAR EDO HAVE USED IT WITH GOOD RESULTS.

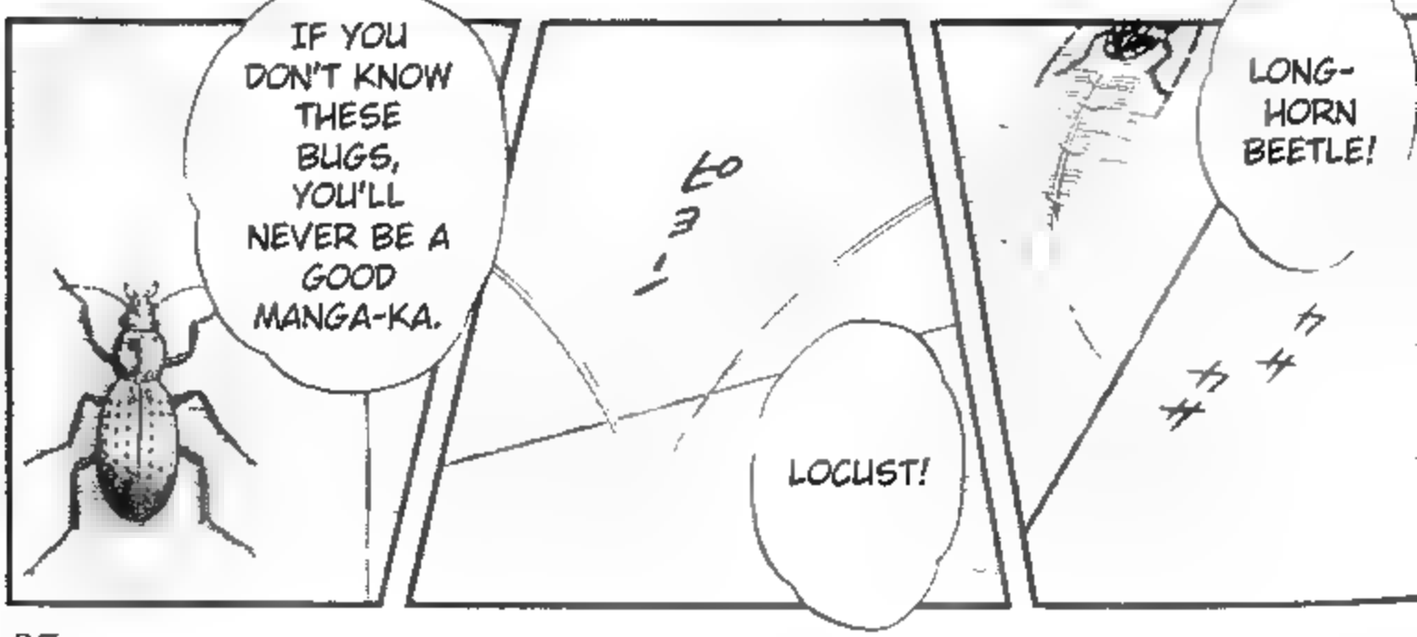


MMM...
GOOD.

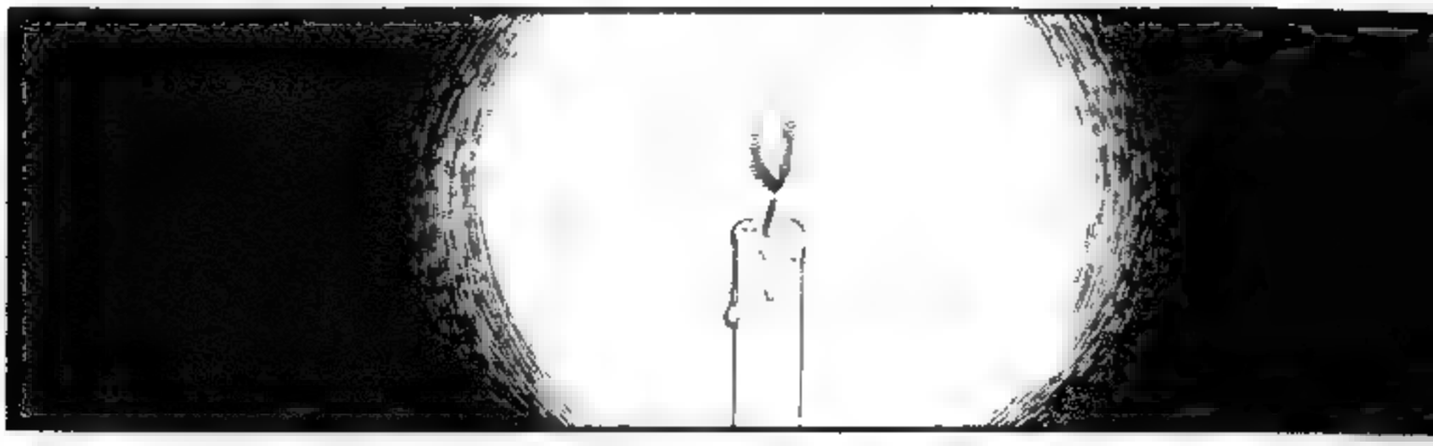
EVERYONE WILL BE HAPPY!
THIS WILL SAVE A LOT OF WORK FOR THE FARMERS.

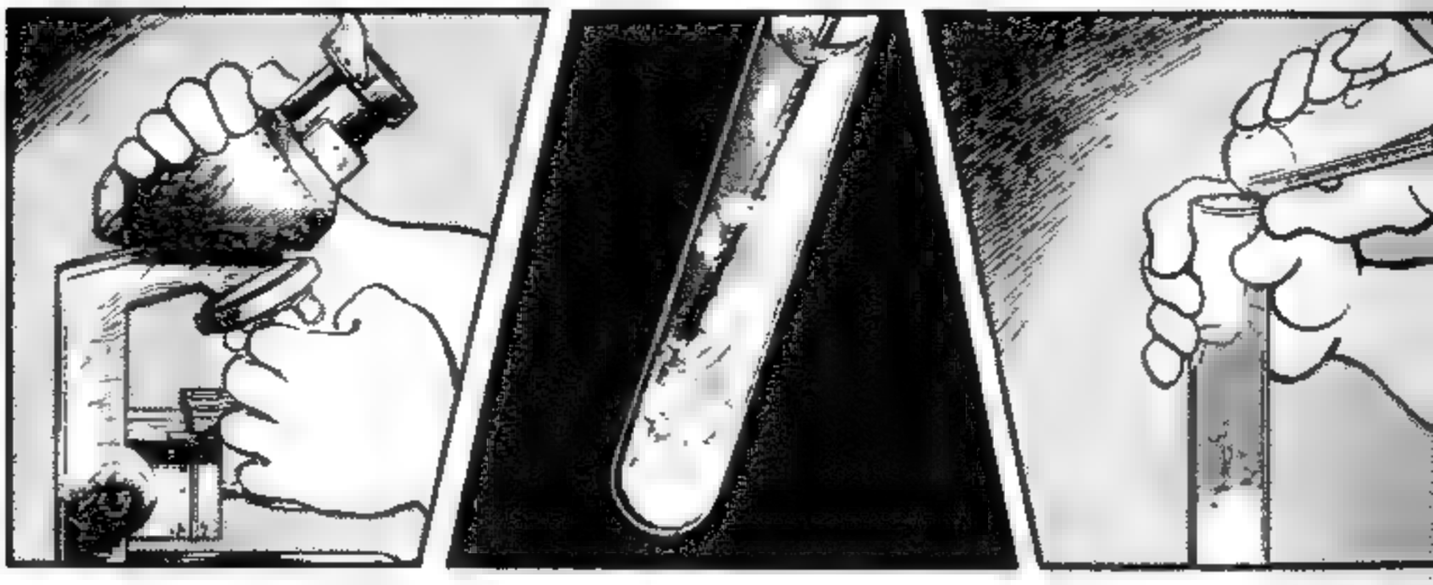

WDP
WATIR DISPERSIGIE PIRD
TNT-DOT

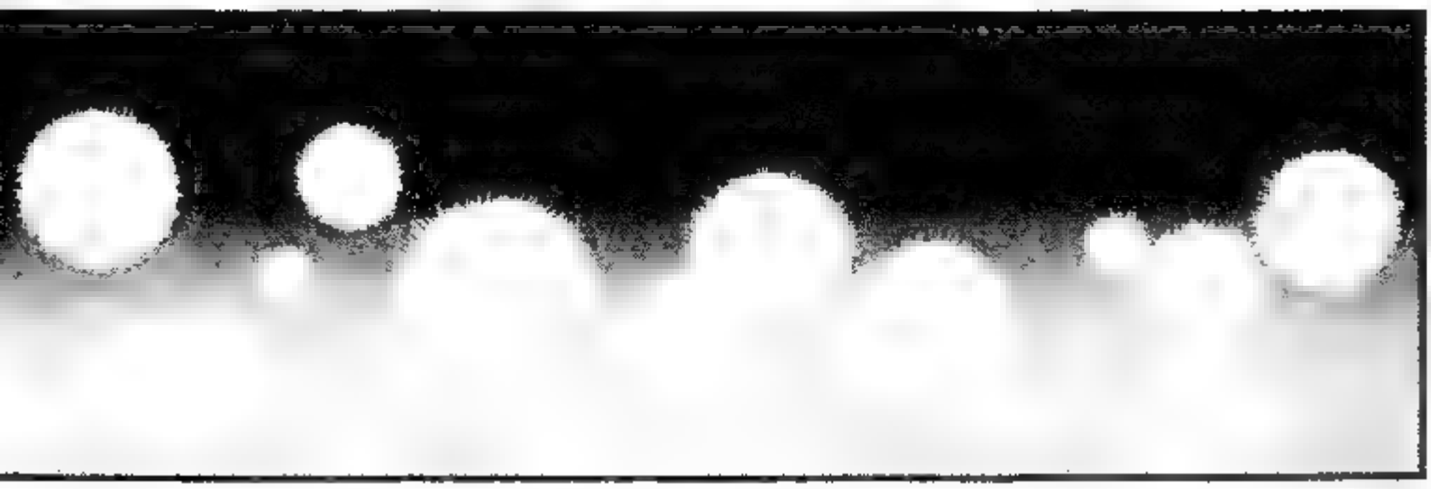



IF YOU DON'T KNOW THESE BUGS, YOU'LL NEVER BE A GOOD MANGA-KA.
LOCUST!
LONG-HORN BEETLE!

THEY'RE JUST AS BUGLIKE AS FIREFLIES!
GROSS!
WHY DIDN'T YOU PUT IT IN A CAGE!
HMPH!
EEEK!
OKAY!
SNASHOU! GET SOME GRASS TO FEED THEM WITH! WE'LL CAGE THESE.







BUGS ARE BUGS, PLANTS ARE PLANTS...

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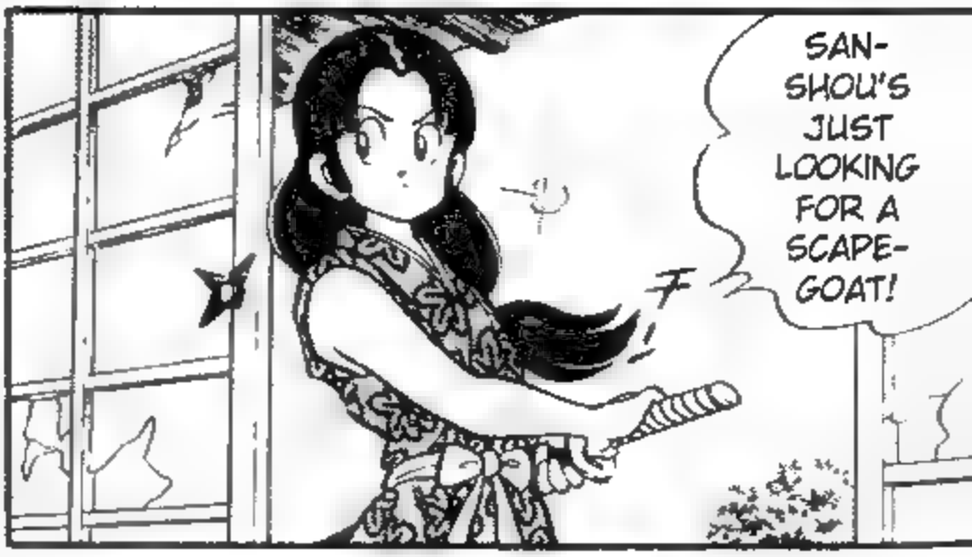
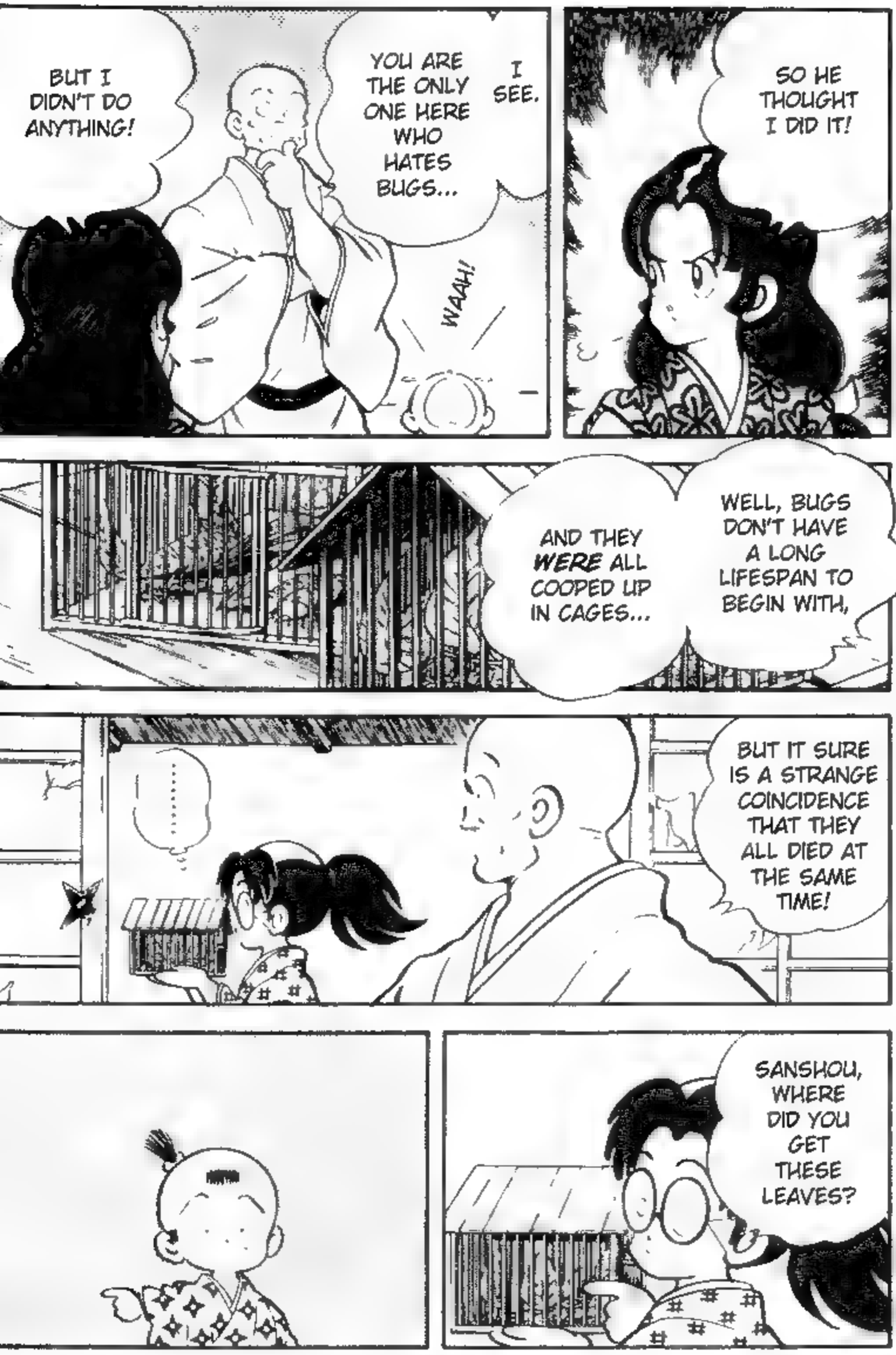
HEY!
WAIT!

SAN-SHOU!
WHAT ARE YOU FIGHT-ING OVER?
WAAH ...

WHAT? ALL THE BUGS YOU CAUGHT DIED?


SAN-SHOU'S JUST LOOKING FOR A SCAPE-GOAT!


BUT I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING!
YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE HERE WHO HATES BUGS...
I SEE.
WAAH!
SO HE THOUGHT I DID IT!
AND THEY WERE ALL COOPED UP IN CAGES...
WELL, BUGS DON'T HAVE A LONG LIFESPAN TO BEGIN WITH,
.....
BUT IT SURE IS A STRANGE COINCIDENCE THAT THEY ALL DIED AT THE SAME TIME!
SANSHOU, WHERE DID YOU GET THESE LEAVES?

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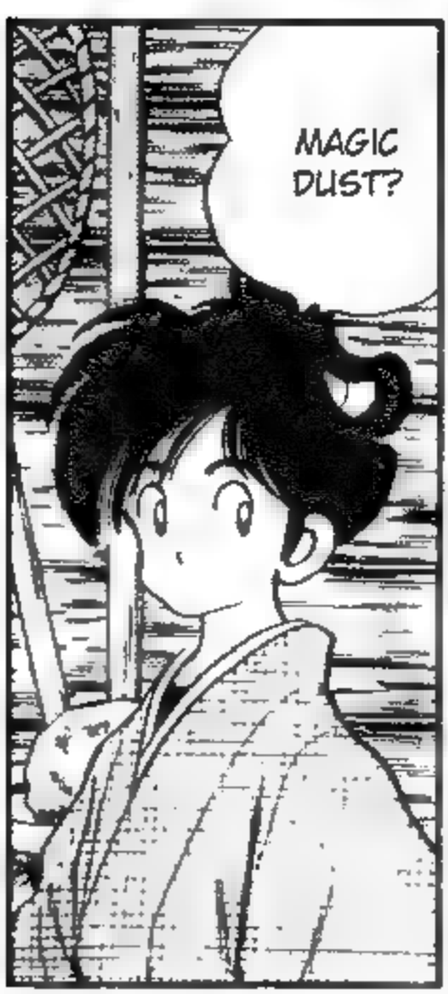
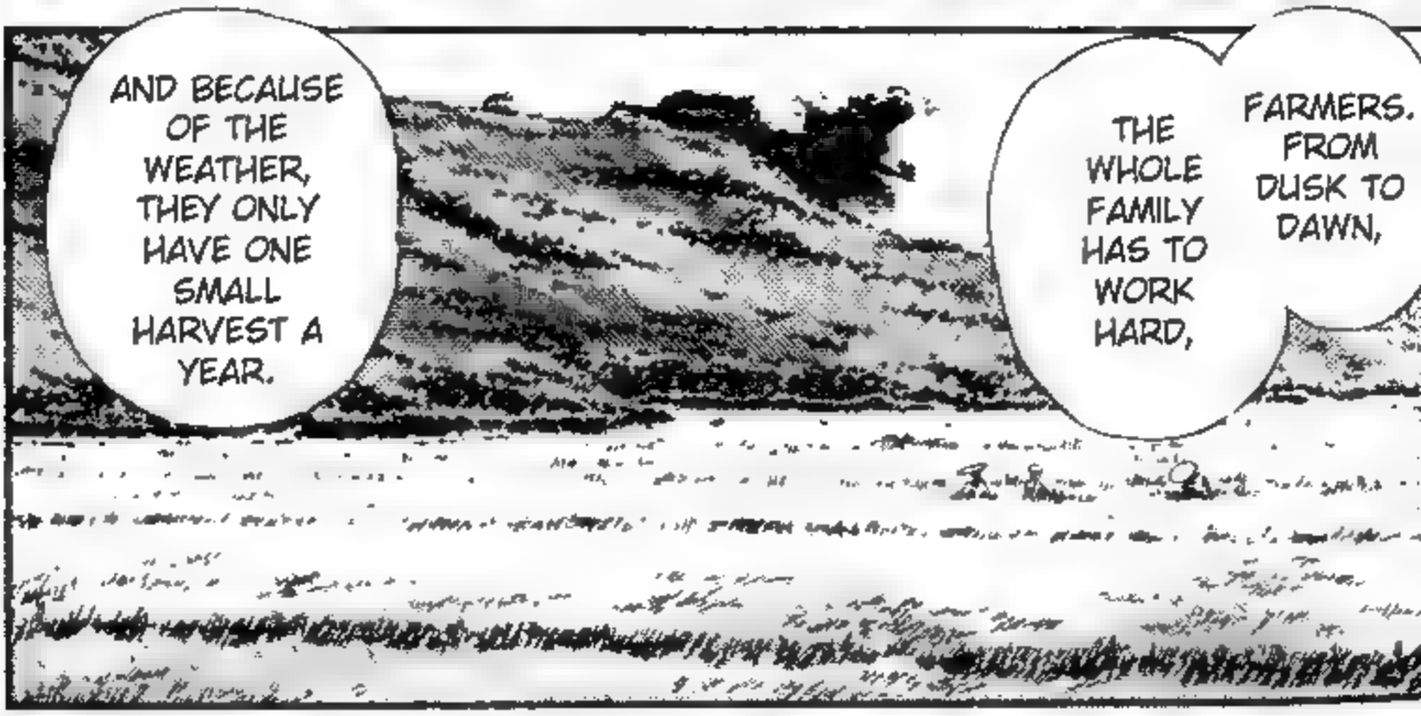
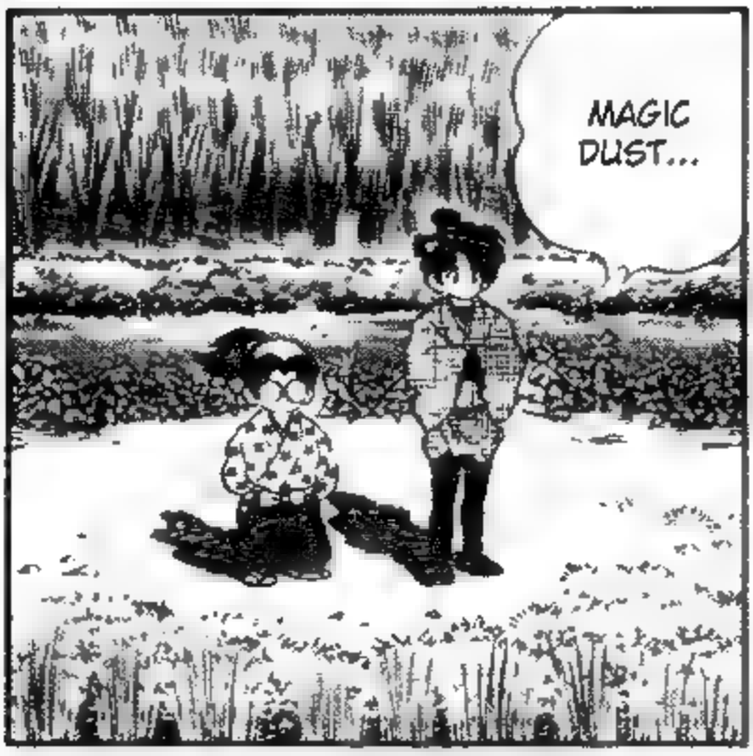
WHAT'S IN THIS SACK?


MAGIC DUST?

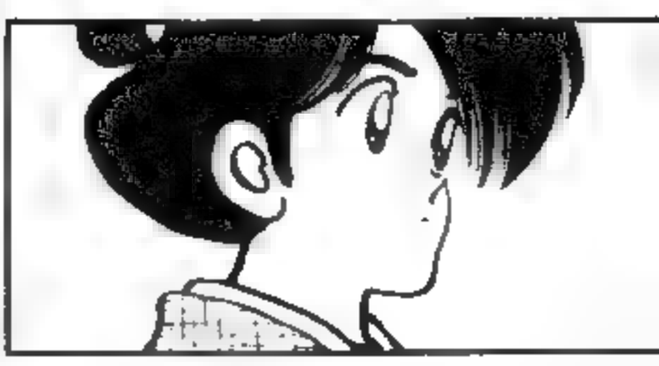
MAGIC DUST.
HUH?
THAT?

ENSURING A LARGE CROP EVERY YEAR!
LETS WHEAT GROW FASTER,
SUPPOS-EDLY, IT GETS RID OF PESTS AND WEEDS,
OH...


AND BECAUSE OF THE WEATHER, THEY ONLY HAVE ONE SMALL HARVEST A YEAR.
THE WHOLE FAMILY HAS TO WORK HARD,
FARMERS. FROM DUSK TO DAWN,


MAGIC DUST...

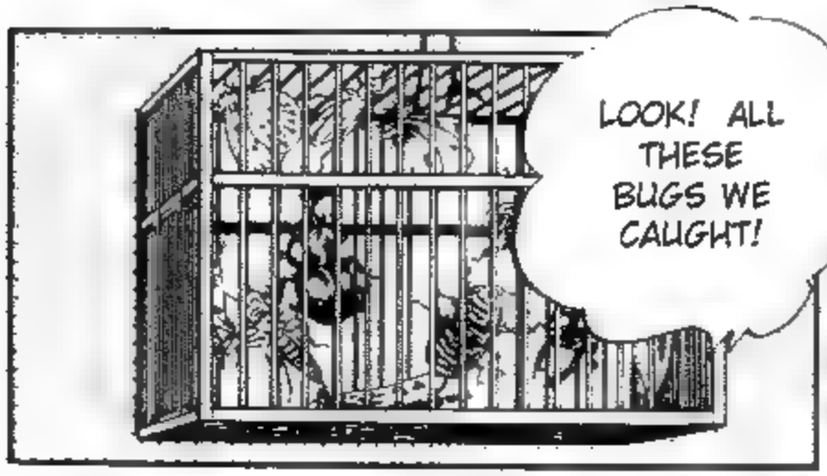
BUT THAT COULD ALL CHANGE ...

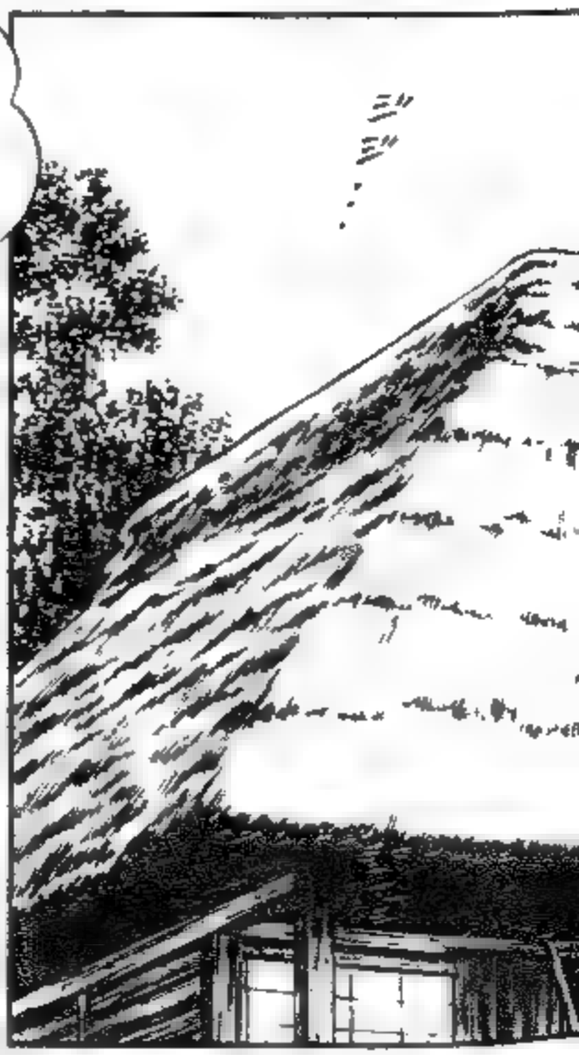


IT'S ALREADY BEEN PROVEN EFFECTIVE IN THE TOWNSHIPS AROUND EDO!
LETS WHEAT GROW FASTER,
GETS RID OF PESTS AND WEEDS,
IT'LL REDUCE THEIR WORK BY HALF!
BUT PESTS ARE DIFFERENT BUGS, AND WEEDS ARE DIFFERENT PLANTS? RECATEGORIZED SO EASILY?
PLANTS ARE PLANTS, RIGHT?
BUGS ARE BUGS ...
HUH?
AND SOME THINGS MAY BE BAD FOR HUMANS, BUT MAY BE NECESSARY FOR SOME OTHER SPECIES' SURVIVAL!
SOME THINGS ARE GOOD FOR HUMANS, BUT ARE A THREAT TO OTHER LIVING THINGS.

AND THEN THAT SPECIES COULD BE A THREAT TO ANOTHER ONE...
OR A NECES-SITY!

HUH?
WHAT?


LOOK! ALL THESE BUGS WE CAUGHT!



JUST KILL THE BAD ONES?
CAN YOUR MAGIC DUST REALLY "CLEANSE" THEM?

I DIDN'T THINK SO.
WELL, NOT UNLESS IT GETS EATEN DIRECTLY ...
NO!
AND SO THIS STUFF, CAN IT KILL MEN TOO?
IT REMINDS ME... IN THAT BOOK I STOLE FROM THE GAIJIN HALL...
YOU MEAN IT DOESN'T STAY IN THE GROUND? OR IN WATER?
I MEAN, IF USED IMPROP-ERLY...
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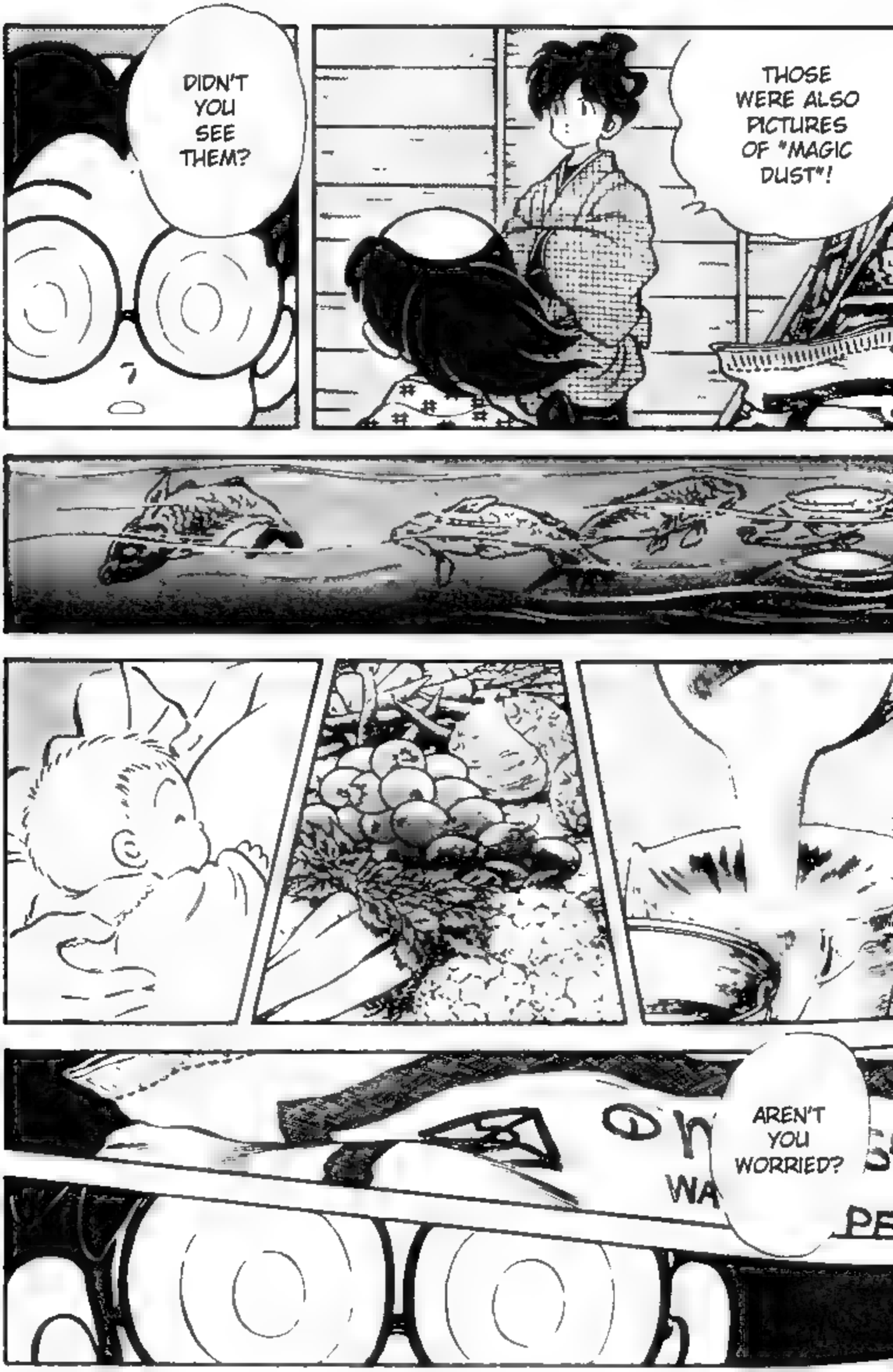
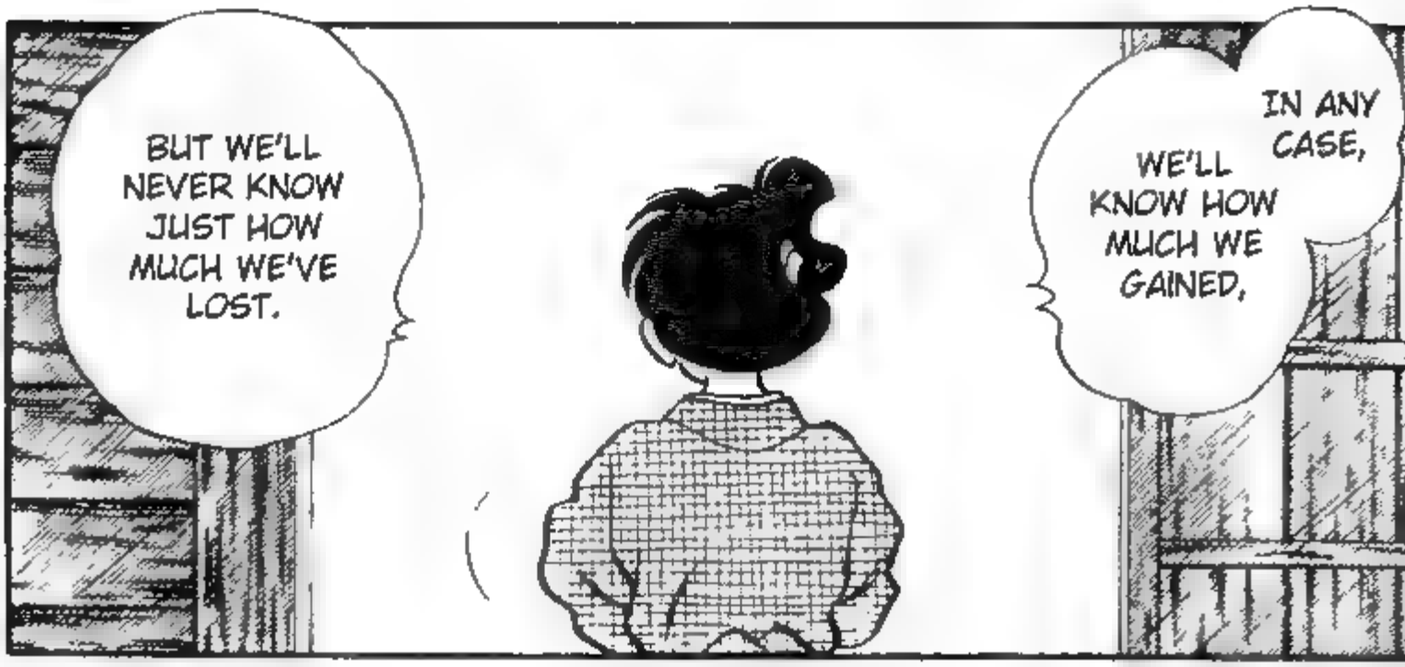
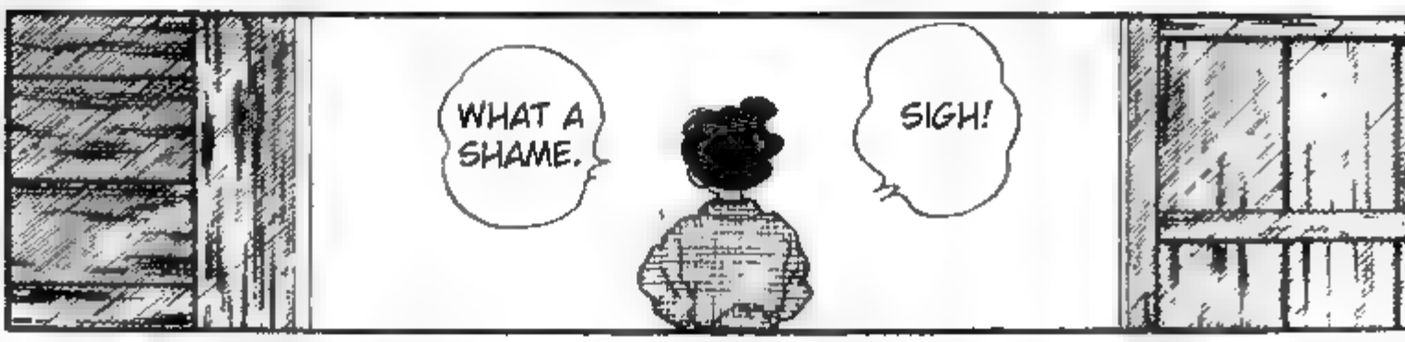
NOW THAT YOU'VE MENTIONED THE GAIJIN MADE IT,


DIDN'T YOU SEE THEM?
THOSE WERE ALSO PICTURES OF "MAGIC DUST"!
AREN'T YOU WORRIED?

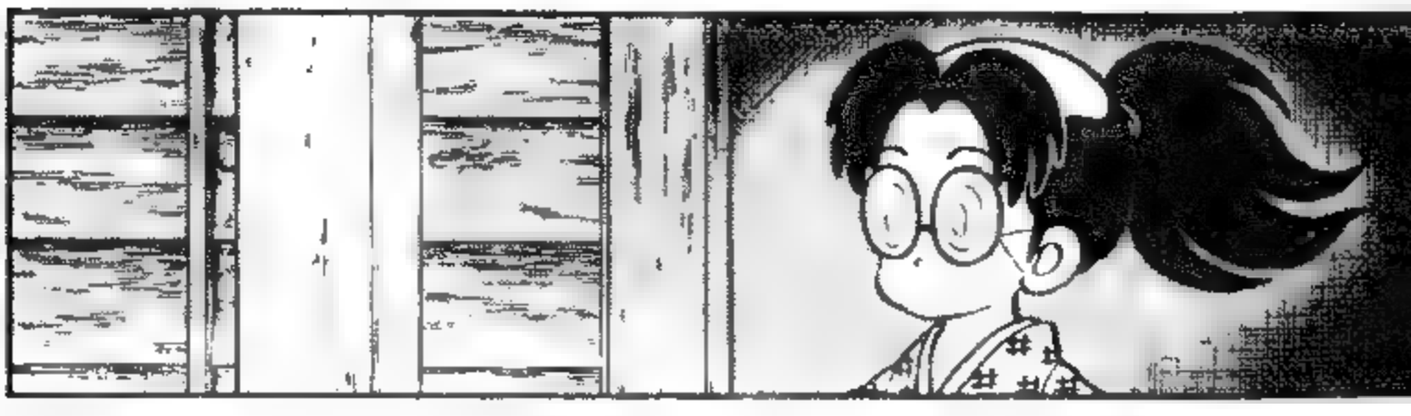
BUT IT'LL MAKE LESS WORK FOR THE FARMERS! YOU CAN'T DENY THAT!
I CAN'T TELL WITHOUT FURTHER RE-SEARCH.
IT'S ONLY A HYPOTH-ESIS ...
IT'S NOT JUST THIS VIL-LAGE.
SOMETHING THIS CONVENIENT WILL SPREAD THE COUNTRY IN AN INSTANT!
BUT, BUT,
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW HARD THEY WORK!
ONCE A MAN'S LIFE BECOMES EASIER...
HE'LL NEVER RETURN TO HARD WORK!
SORRY. MAYBE I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID ANYTHING.
TRUE. I DON'T KNOW.

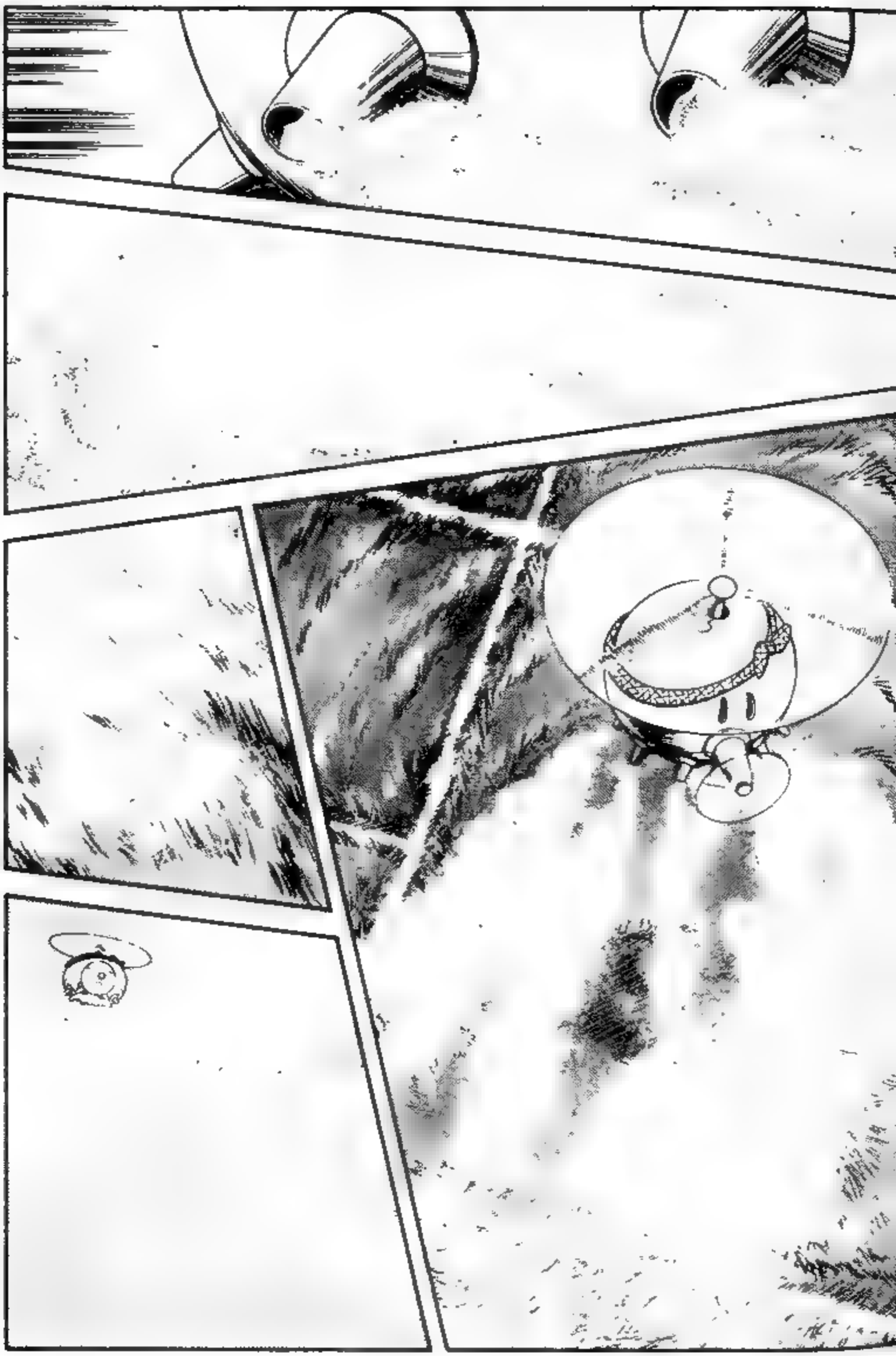

BUT WE'LL NEVER KNOW JUST HOW MUCH WE'VE LOST.
IN ANY CASE, WE'LL KNOW HOW MUCH WE GAINED,


WHAT A SHAME.
SIGH!

YEARS AGO, THERE WAS A FAMINE. MANY OF THE VILLAGERS DIED.
THEY SAY THERE WERE MANY PARENTS WHO DIED OF MALNUTRITION BECAUSE THEY GAVE EVERY LITTLE SCRAP OF FOOD TO THEIR CHILDREN.
OH.
UM.
ONE OF THEM WAS CHINPI'S MOTHER.

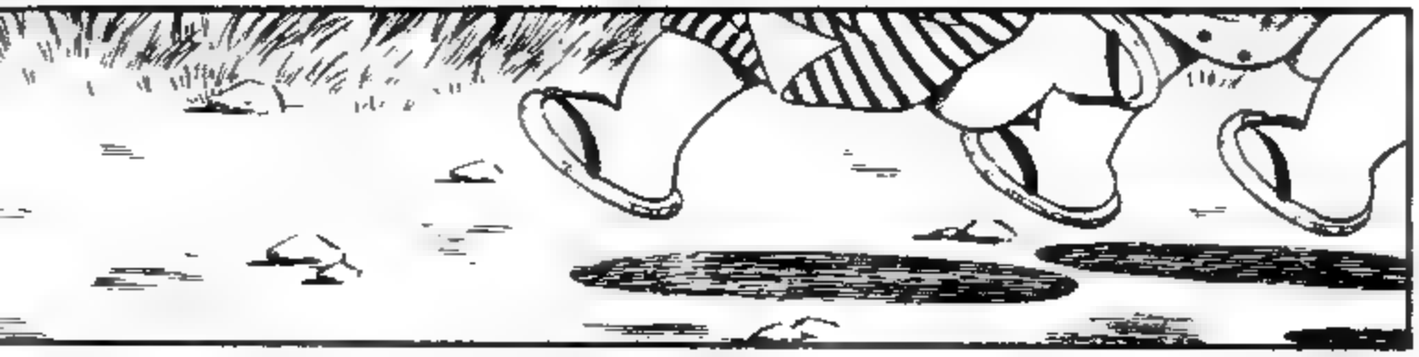
哎——





MORE AMAZING TO TELL YOU, THEN.
REALLY? I'VE SOME-THING
AMAZING!
AMAZING!
IT'S AMAZING!
IN TRUTH, CHINPI HERE IS RESPON-SIBLE FOR ALL OF IT!
WHAT?
THANK YOU!
THANK YOU!

GOODBYE FIREFLY VILLAGE



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THE SCATTERING ISN'T FINISHED YET!
DON'T COME OUTSIDE!

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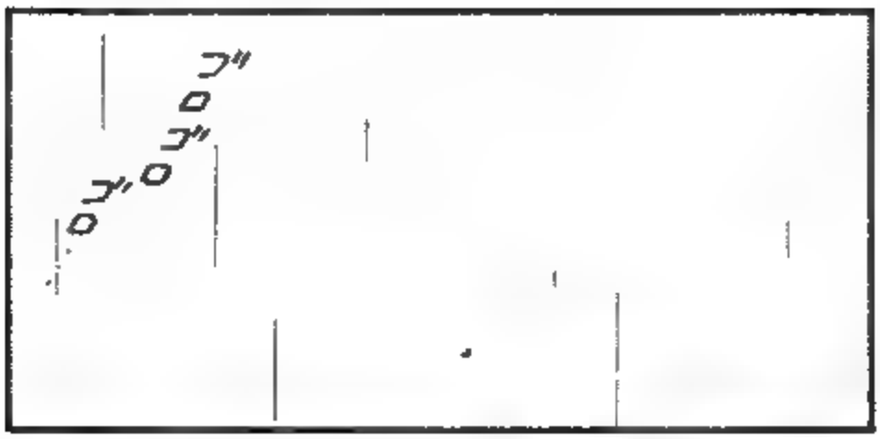
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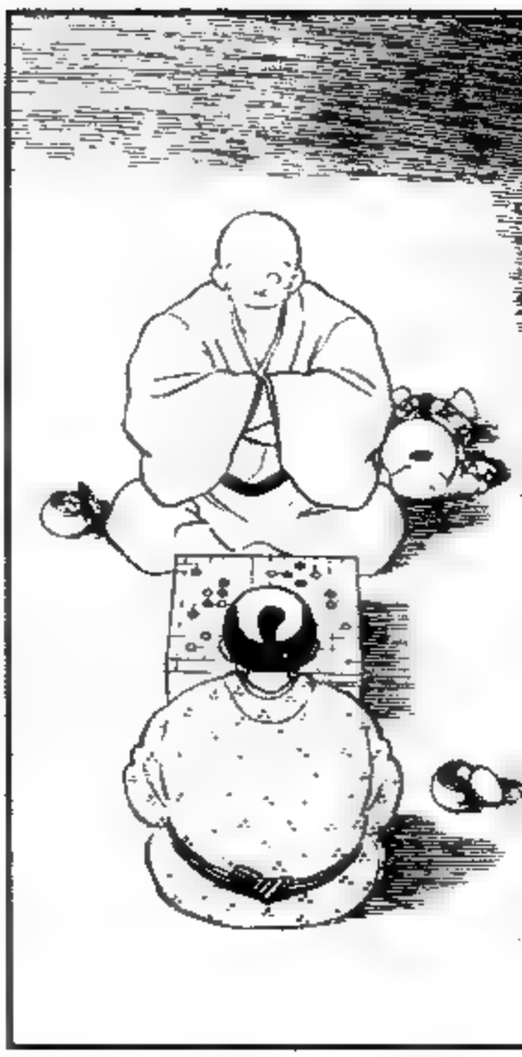

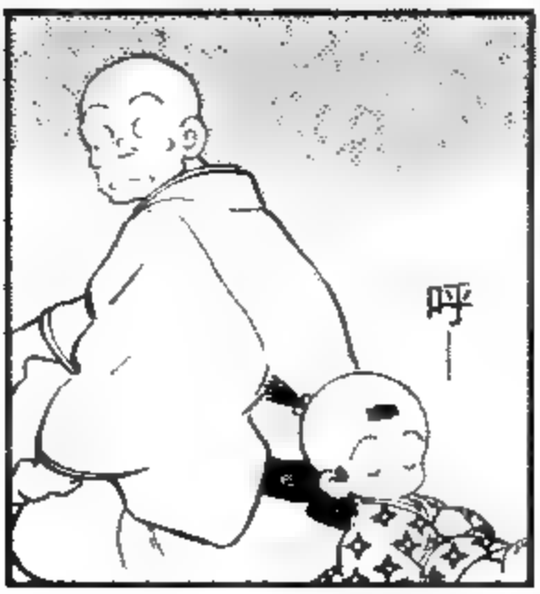
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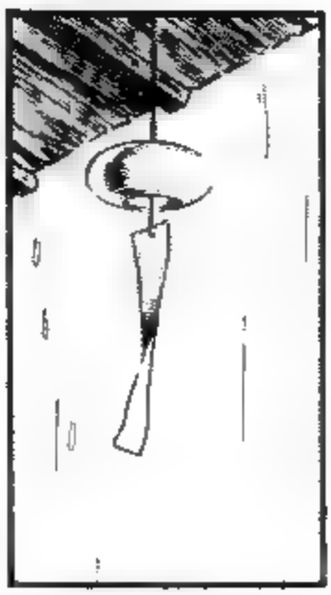
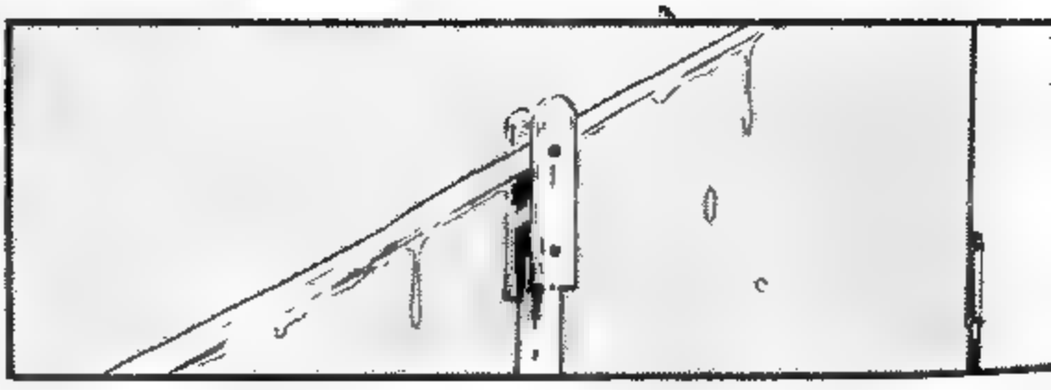
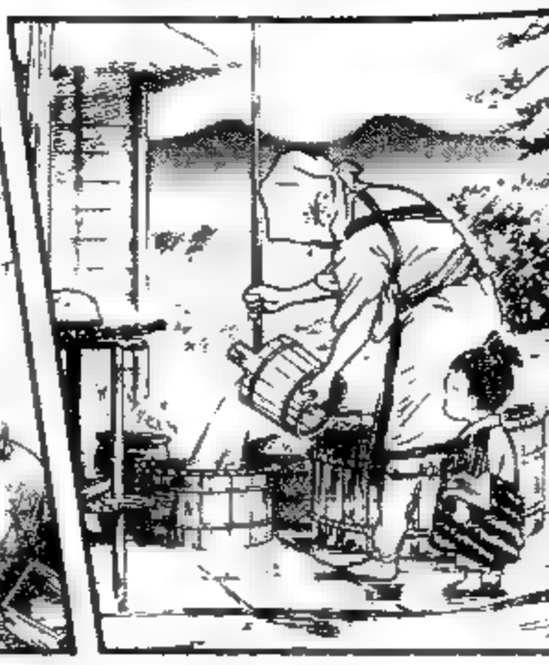
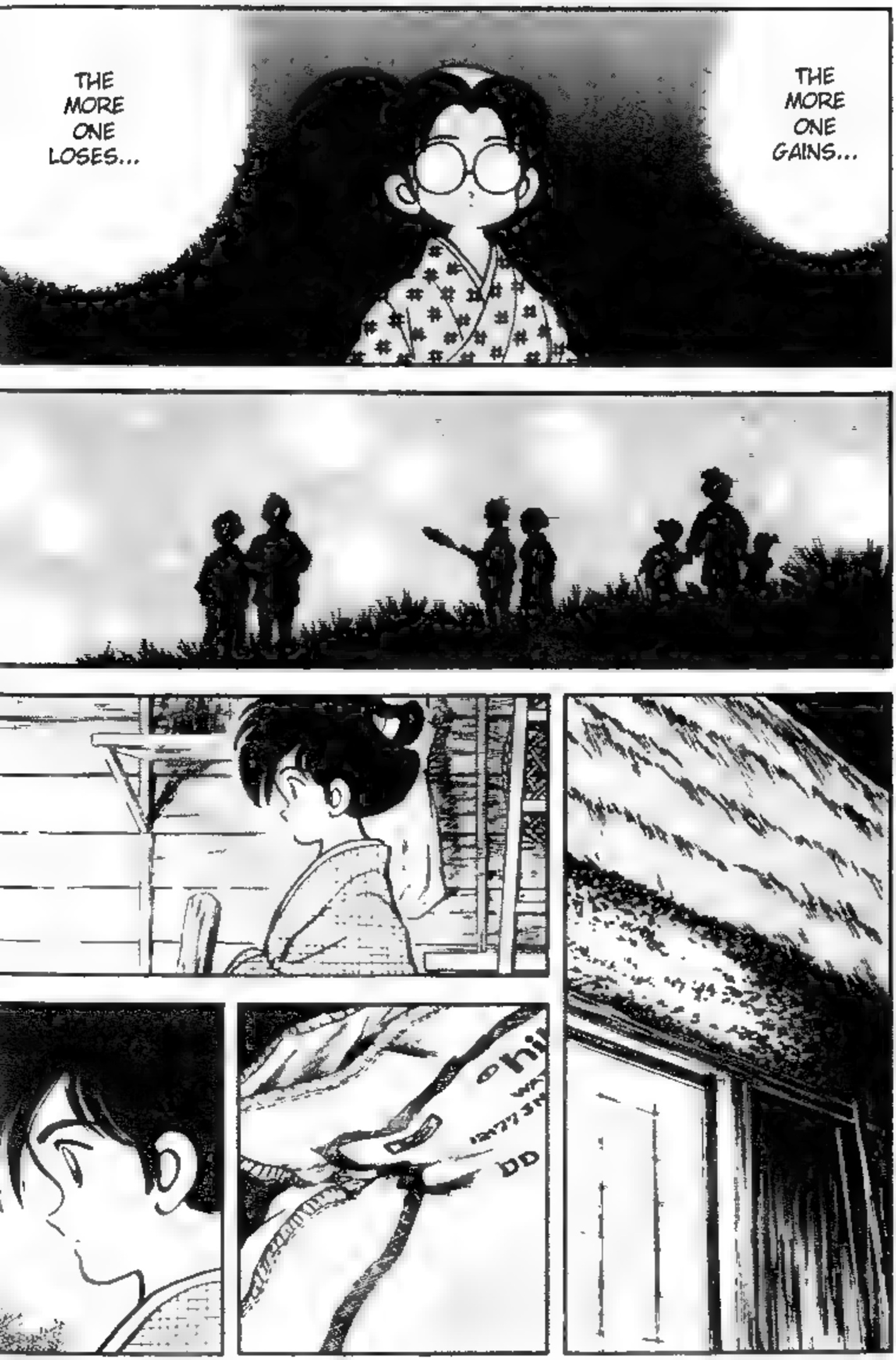






ME?
OUTSIDE.
CHINPI? WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
HE'S JUST FEELING NOSTAL-GIC.
DON'T WORRY.
HE'S ACTING FUNNY.
A SHAME, REALLY ...
HOW CAN I BE NOSTALGIC WHEN I DON'T RE-MEMBER ANYTHING?
HA!
AND NATANE'S NEXT.
YUP!


THE MORE ONE LOSES...
THE MORE ONE GAINS...

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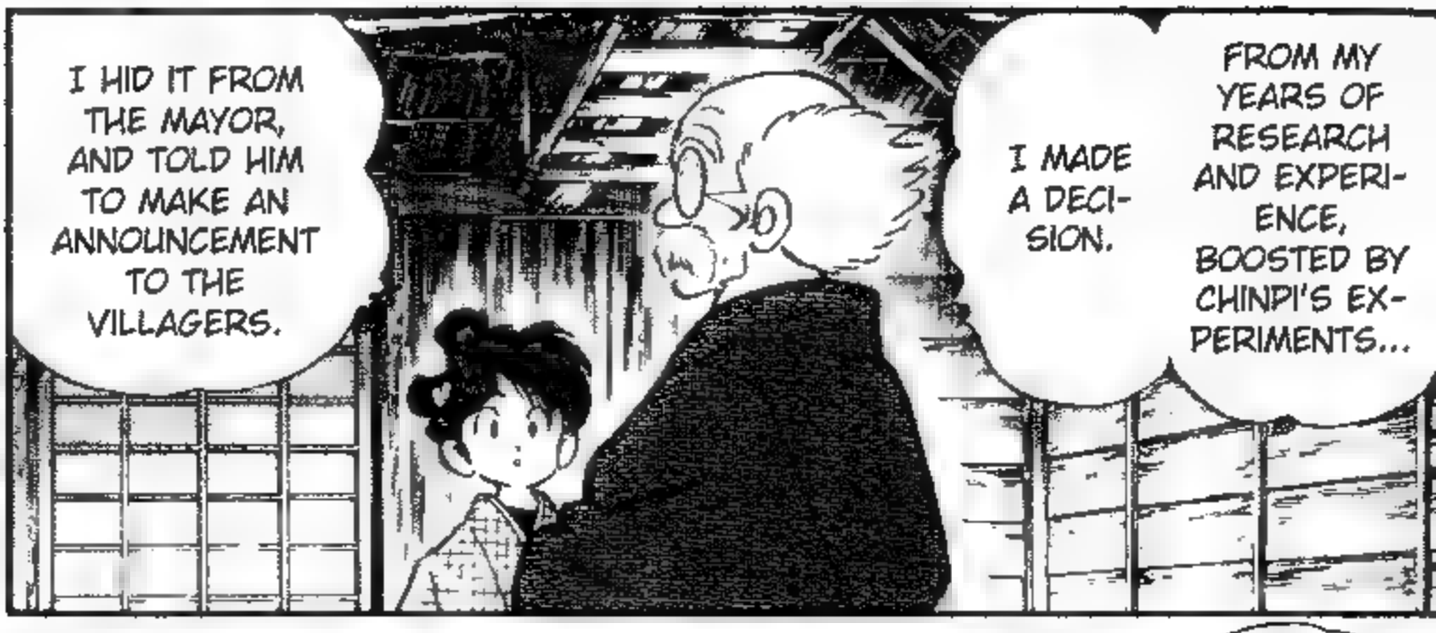
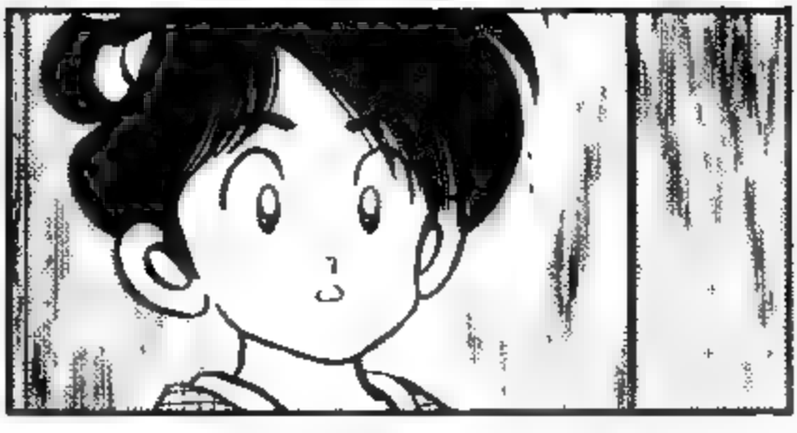
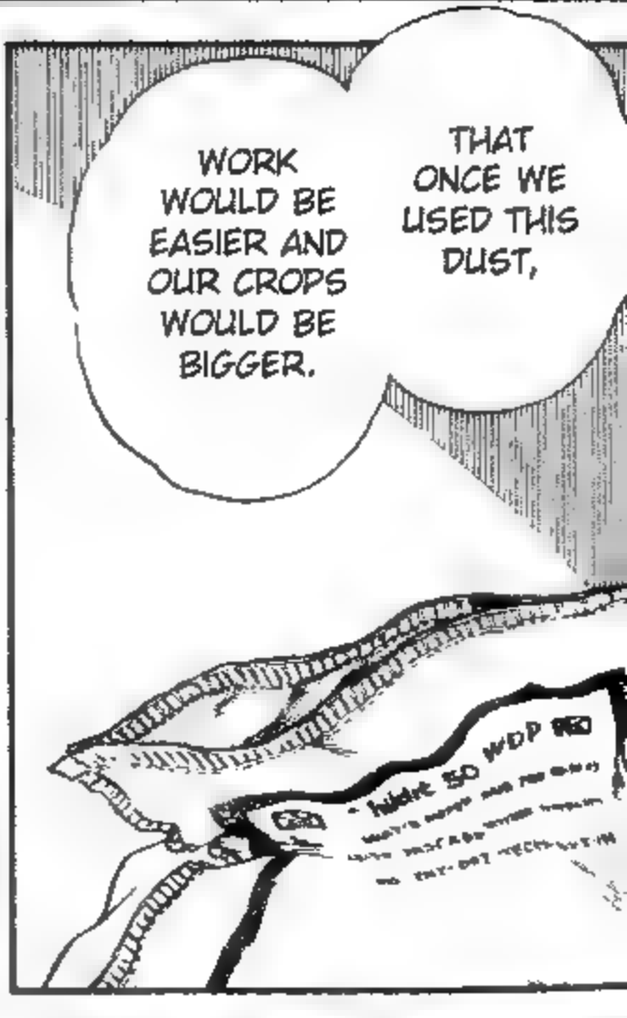
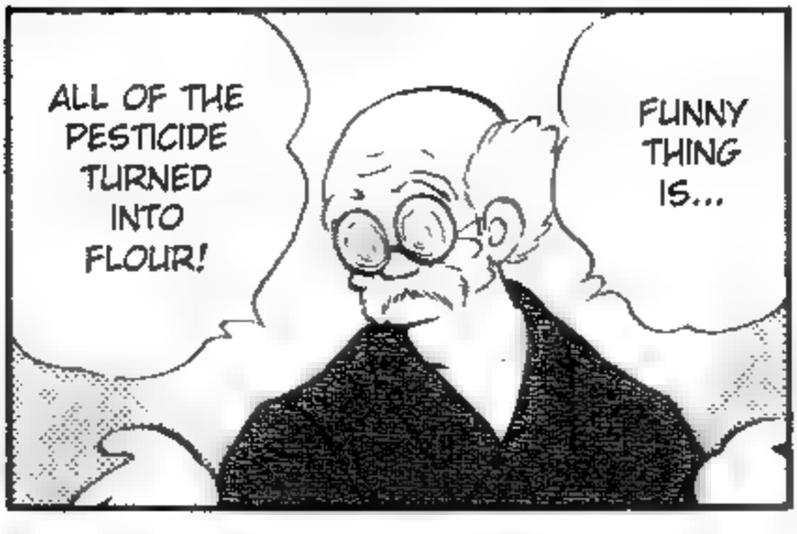
DON'T WORRY.
YOU'LL BE FINE.
咳

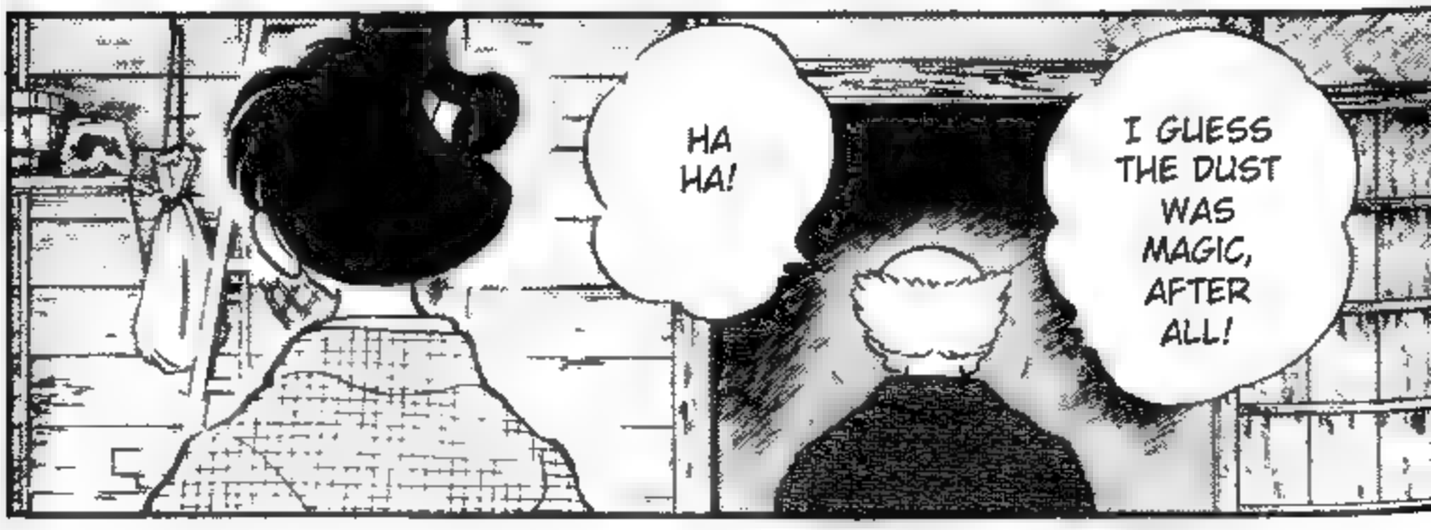
IT'S JUST FLOUR.
WHAT?
WHEN CHINPI WASN'T NOTICING...
I LOOKED IN HIS NOTES.
NOTES ON MAGIC DUST
HE WAS QUITE DETAILED ABOUT THE DUST'S CHEMISTRY.
ACCORDING TO THESE NOTES, THE "DUST" WOULD HAVE DRASTIC EFFECTS ON THE SOIL AND WATER.


I HID IT FROM THE MAYOR, AND TOLD HIM TO MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE VILLAGERS.
I MADE A DECISION.
FROM MY YEARS OF RESEARCH AND EXPERIENCE, BOOSTED BY CHINPI'S EXPERIMENTS...

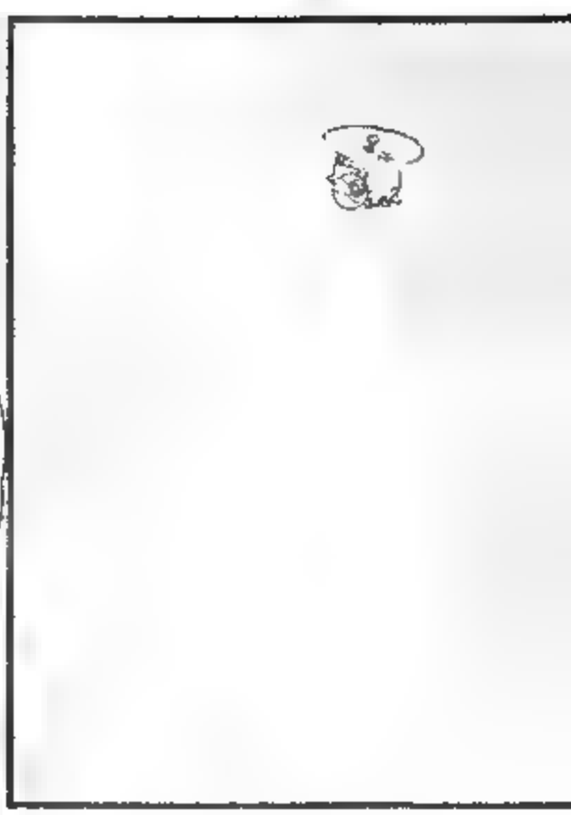



THAT ONCE WE USED THIS DUST,
WORK WOULD BE EASIER AND OUR CROPS WOULD BE BIGGER.

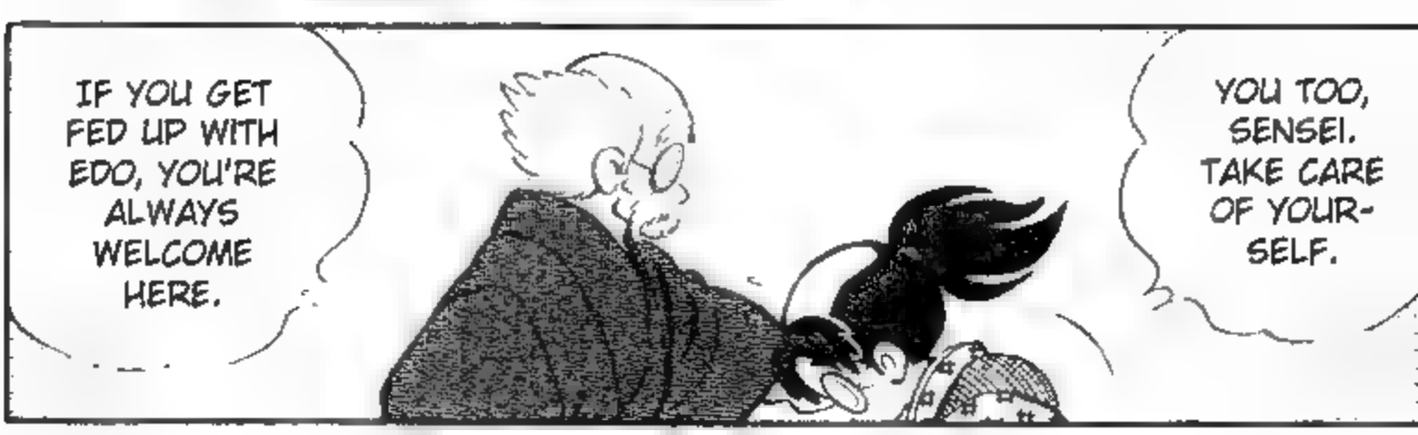

ALL OF THE PESTICIDE TURNED INTO FLOUR!
FUNNY THING IS...


HA HA!
I GUESS THE DUST WAS MAGIC, AFTER ALL!

YUCK!



OH!
GOOD LUCK.
CHINPI ...


IF YOU GET FED UP WITH EDO, YOU'RE ALWAYS WELCOME HERE.
YOU TOO, SENSEI. TAKE CARE OF YOUR-SELF.

WE'LL BE HERE FOR YOU. ME AND THE FIREFLIES.
LET'S GO, CHINPI!

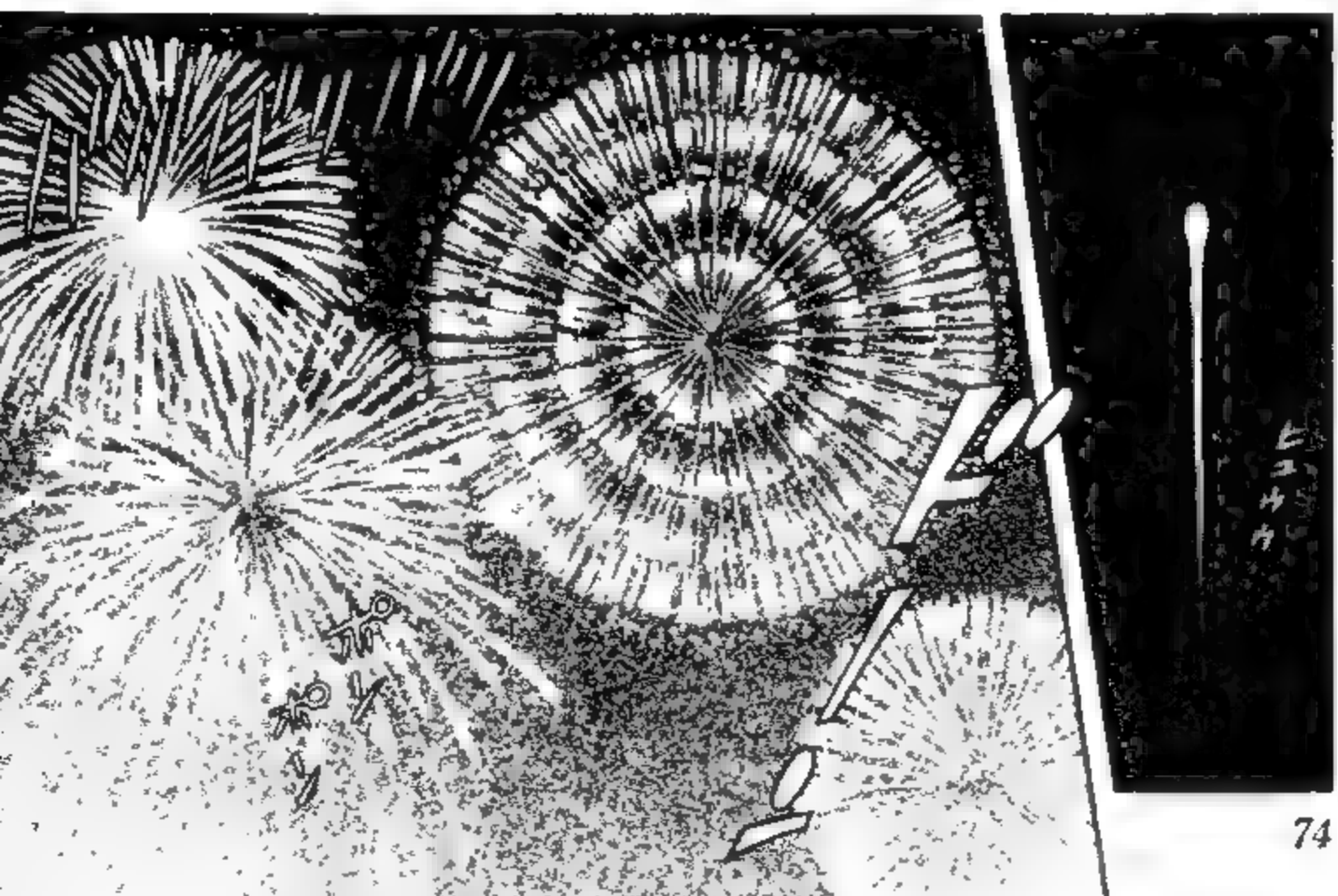
THE PEOPLE IN THIS VILLAGE AREN'T VERY GOOD AT EXPRESSING THEIR EMOTIONS.
...

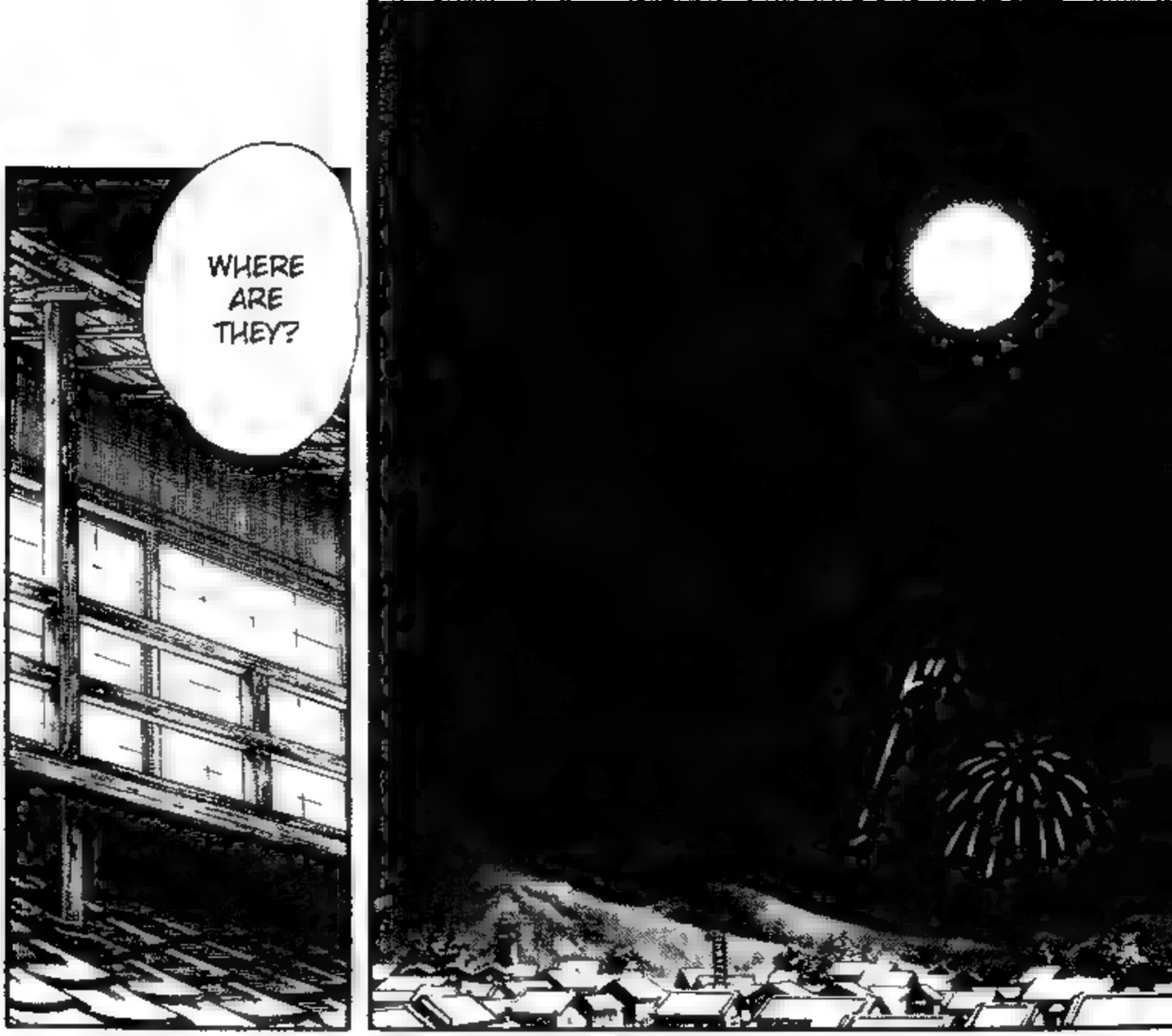
BUT... I SUPPOSE I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT AL-READY.

HUH?

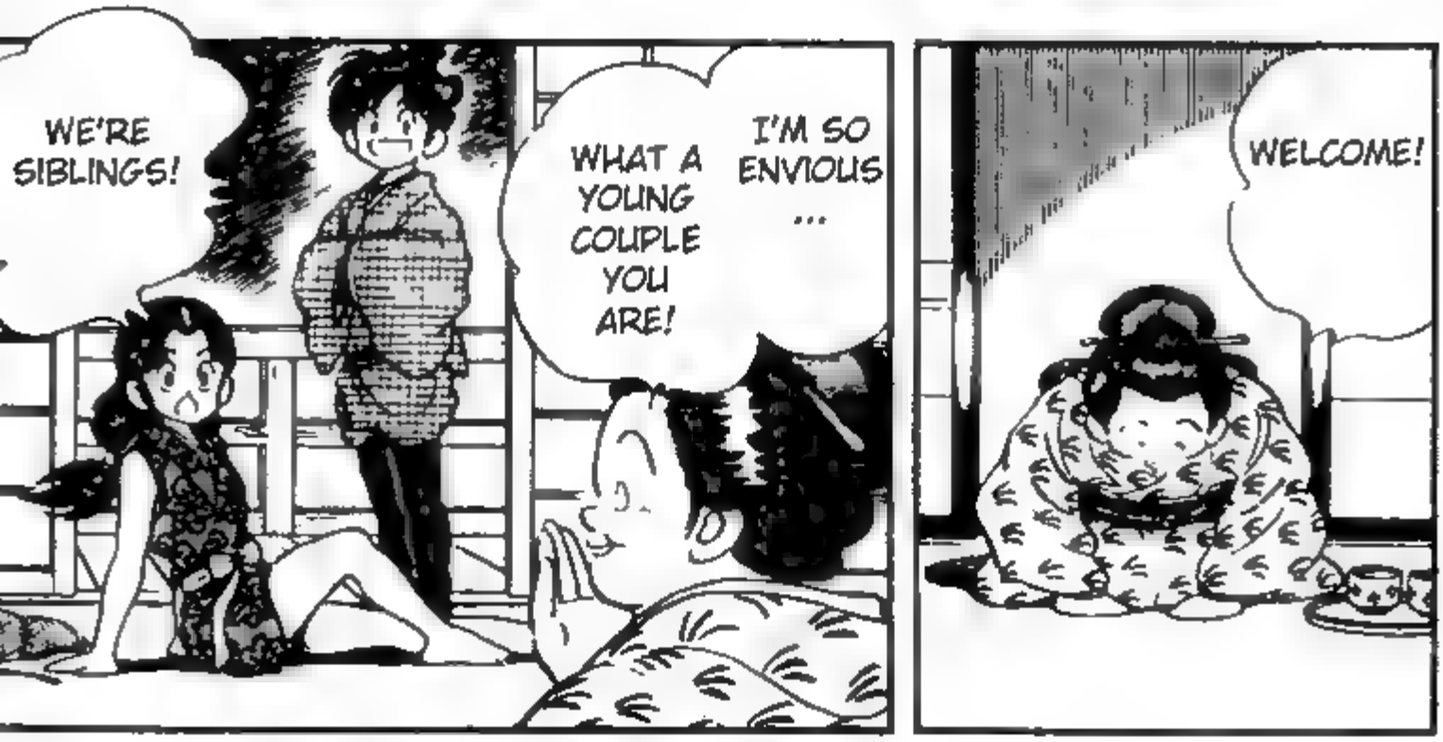
YOU WOULDN'T UNDER-STAND IT IF I TOLD YOU.

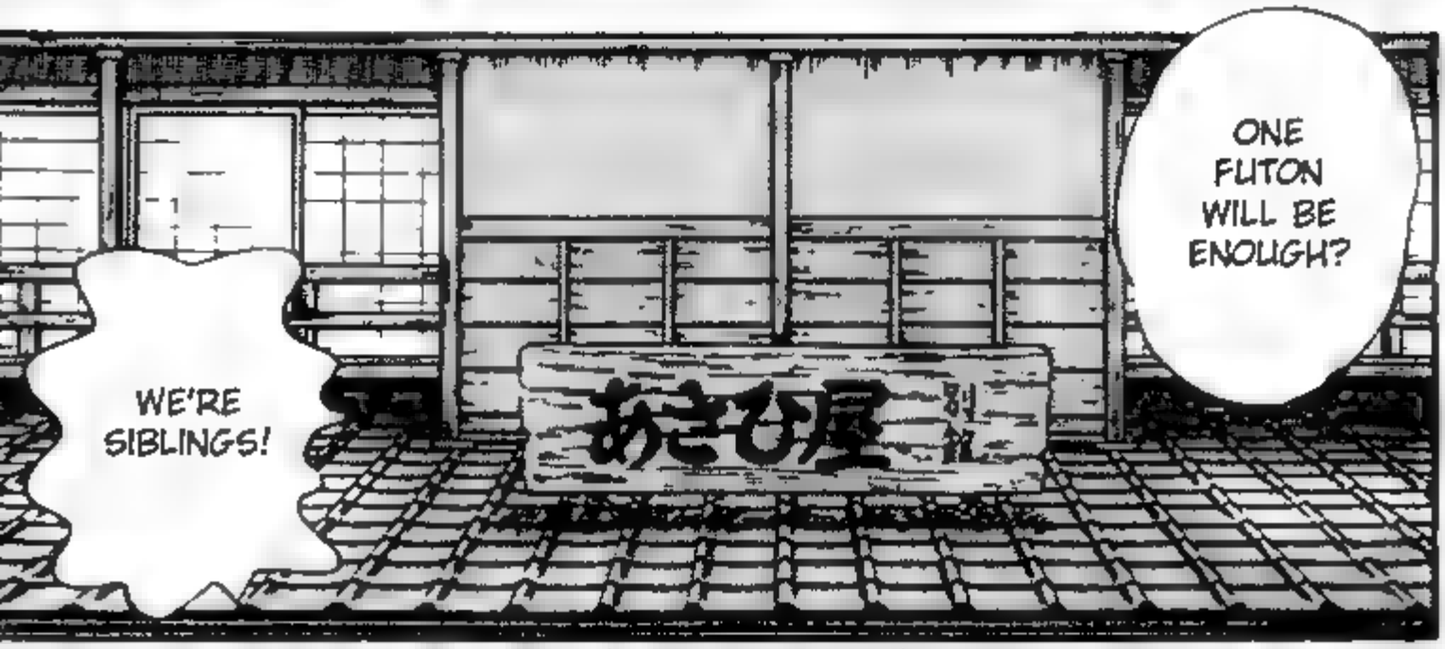
COMING!
HEY! WALK FASTER, YOU TWO!





SIGN: "ASAHI-YA"





SIGN: "ASAHI-YA ANNEX"

※「あさひ屋」意爲「朝日屋」，此處爲別館（分店）。

THE OLD MAN
AND THE BATH

SIGN: "ASAHI-YA MAIN BUILDING"

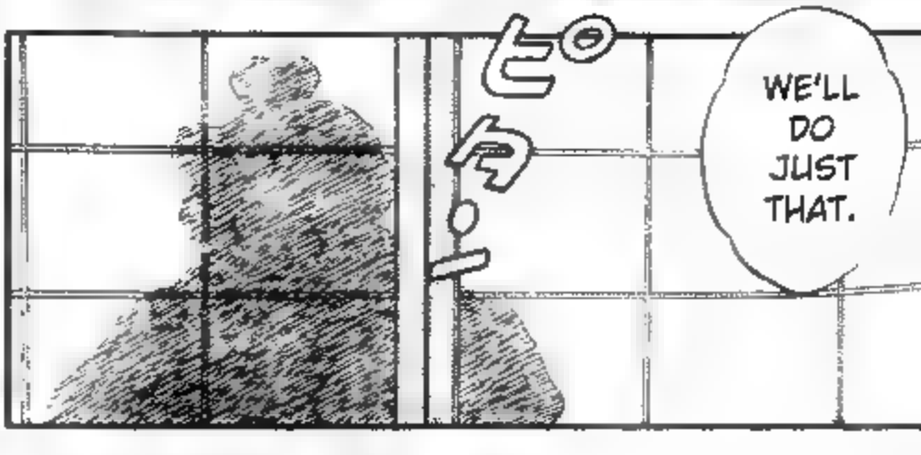
MAYBE THEY COULDN'T FIND THIS INN AND WENT SOMEWHERE ELSE.

WHERE ARE THOSE TWO?

NATANE AND SHICHIMI? THEY CAN TAKE CARE OF THEM-SELVES.
DON'T WORRY!

HERE!
LET'S DRINK!

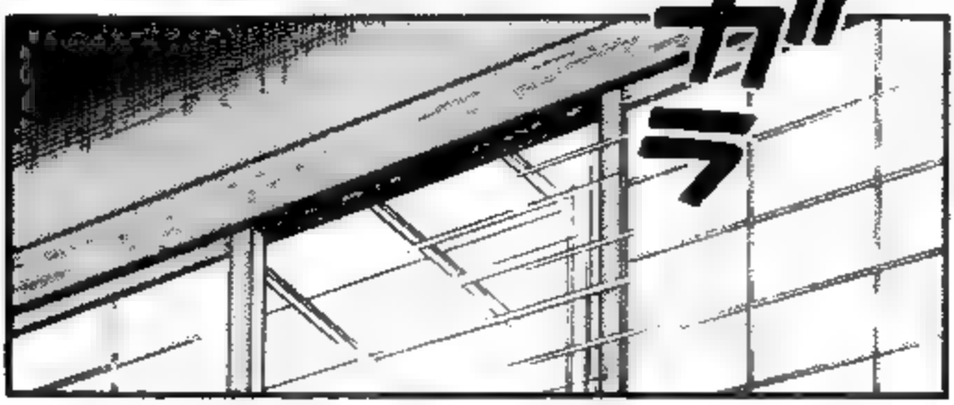
ALL RIGHT THEN.
WE'LL LOOK FOR THEM TOMORROW IF THEY HAVEN'T SHOWN UP BY THEN.


WE'LL DO JUST THAT.

THEN, INSTEAD OF COMING HERE, THEY DECIDED TO STOP AT A LOCAL TAVERN AND PARTY.
YOU KNOW, THE OTHERS PROBABLY GOT DRUNK WHILE WATCHING THE FIRE-WORKS.
カラ
...IS SO NOISY!
THAT ROOM ACROSS FROM US...
HA!
HA!
YOU'RE PROB-ABLY RIGHT.
UM.
HM?
HEY!

IT'S JUST US.
TONIGHT, IN THIS ROOM...
THIS MEANS ...
WE'RE SIBLINGS! WHAT'S THERE TO WORRY ABOUT!?
IDIOT! WHAT ARE YOU THINKING!?
WAIT!
DON'T THINK THINGS LIKE THAT.

OF COURSE.
"OLD" SIBLING? "NEW" SIBLING? DOES IT MATTER?
BUT YOU'RE A NEW SIBLING ...
OH?
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?!
I WANT TO CHANGE. STEP OUT.
WE'RE SIBLINGS! WHAT'S THERE TO WORRY ABOUT!?
I GUESS IT DOES MATTER.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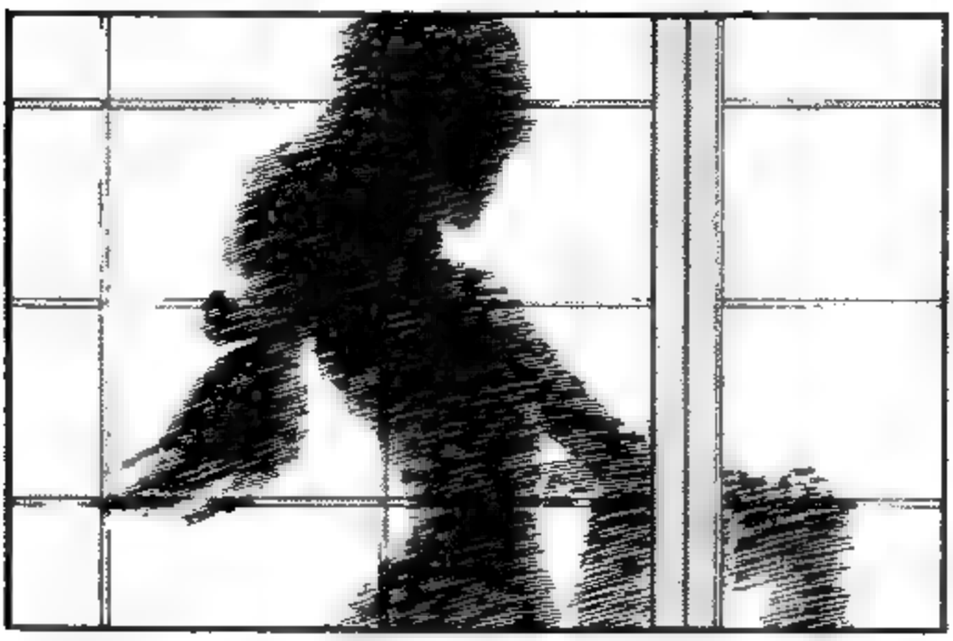
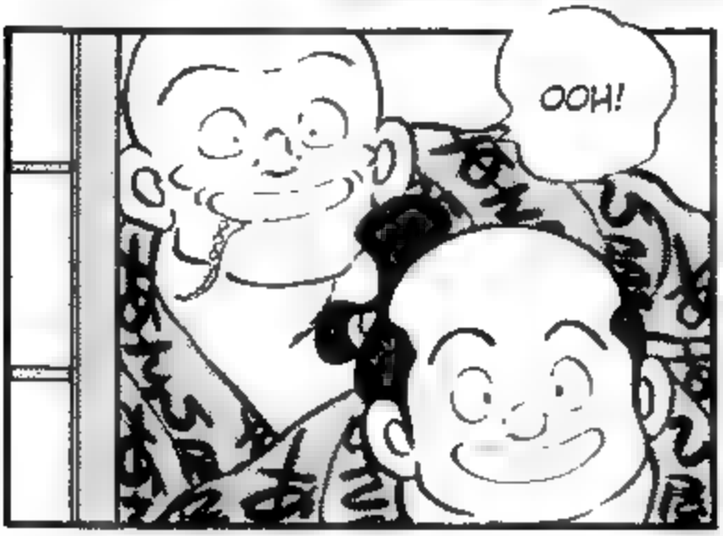
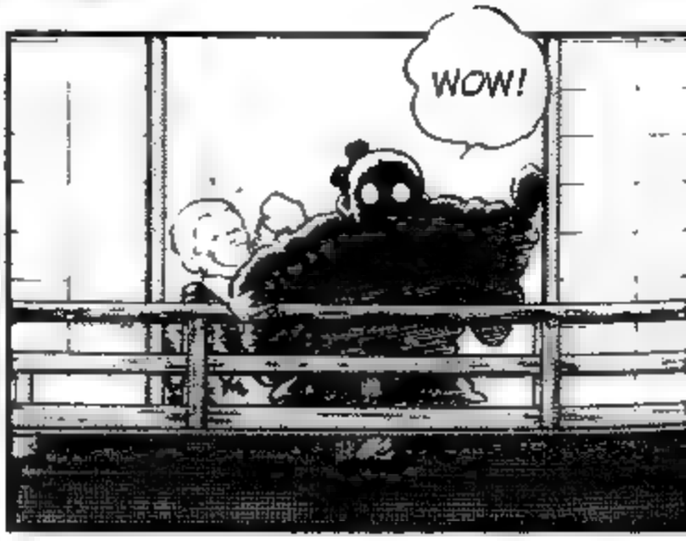
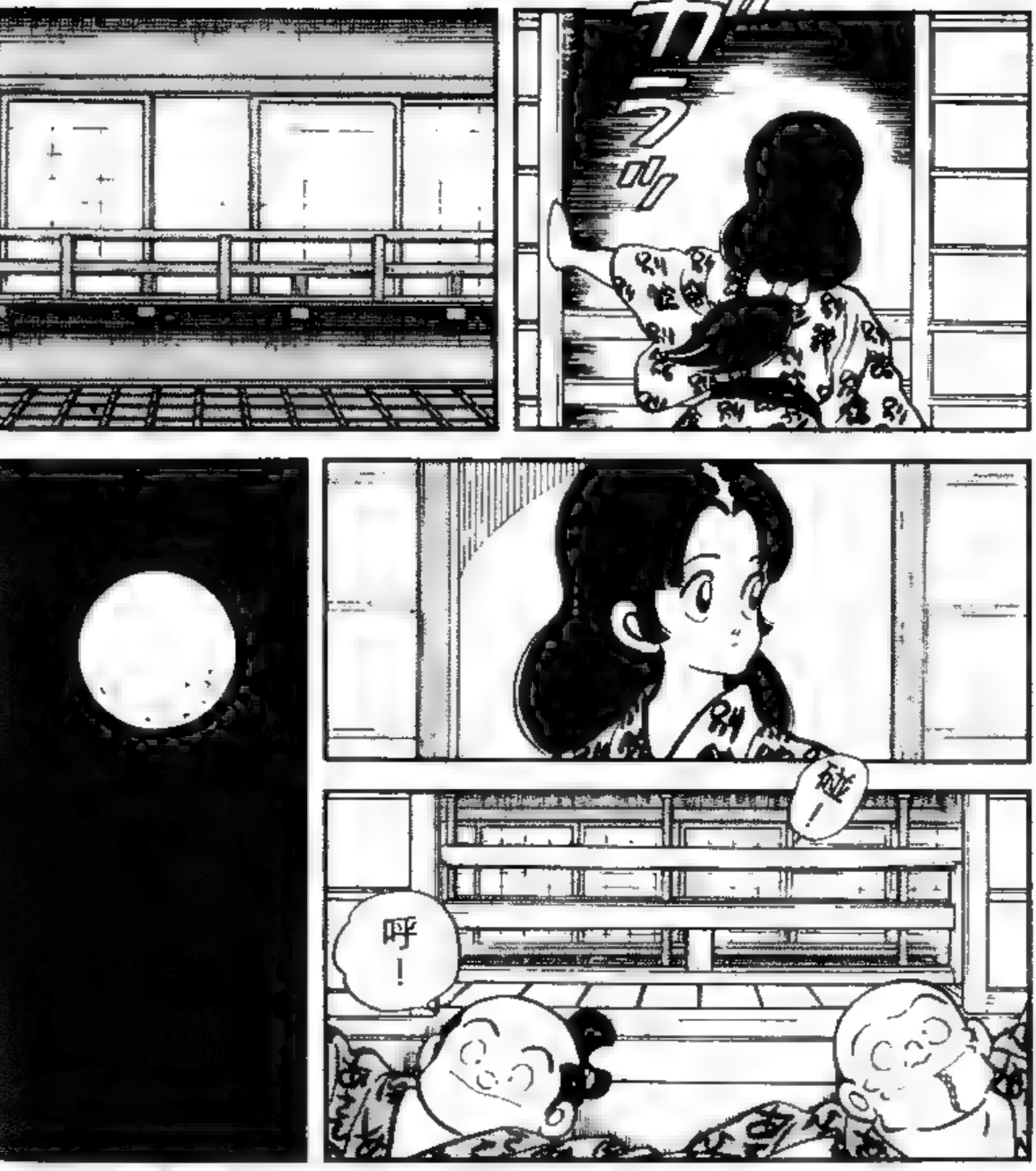


MIGHT AS WELL GO TO THE BATH.


OOH!


WOW!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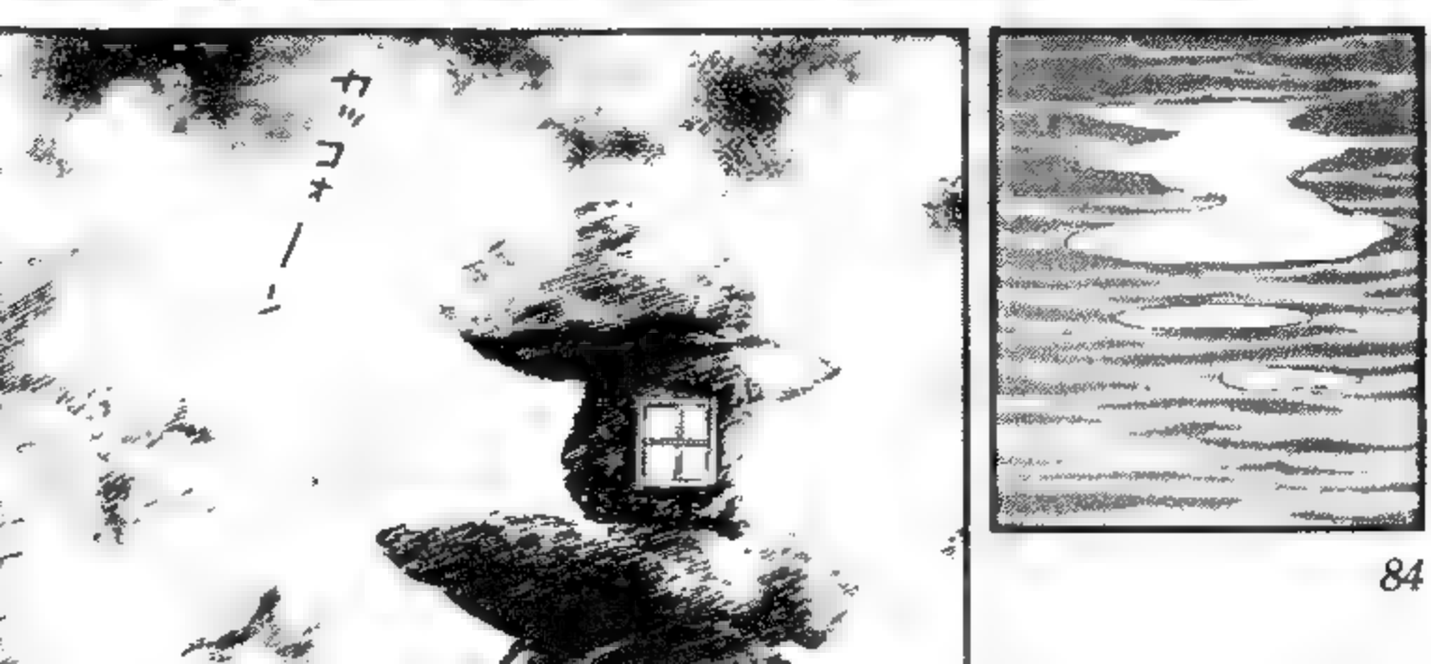
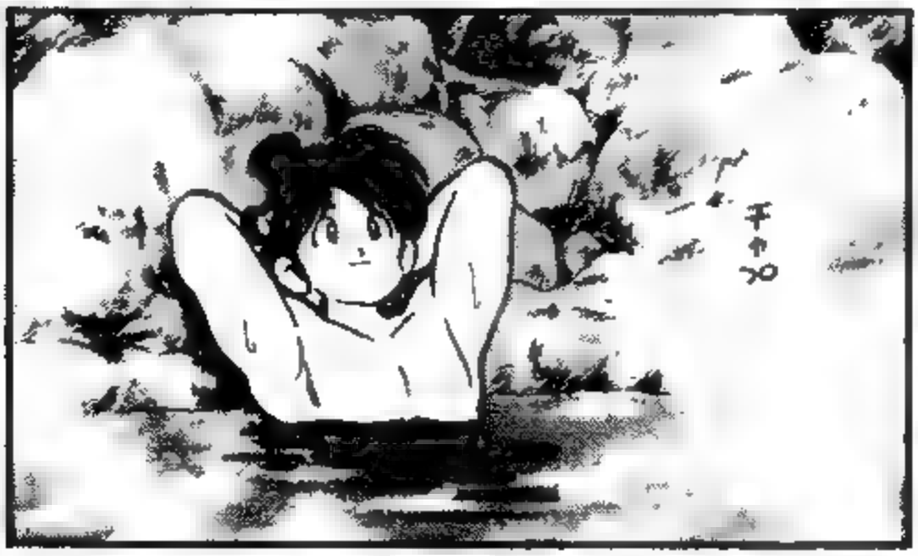
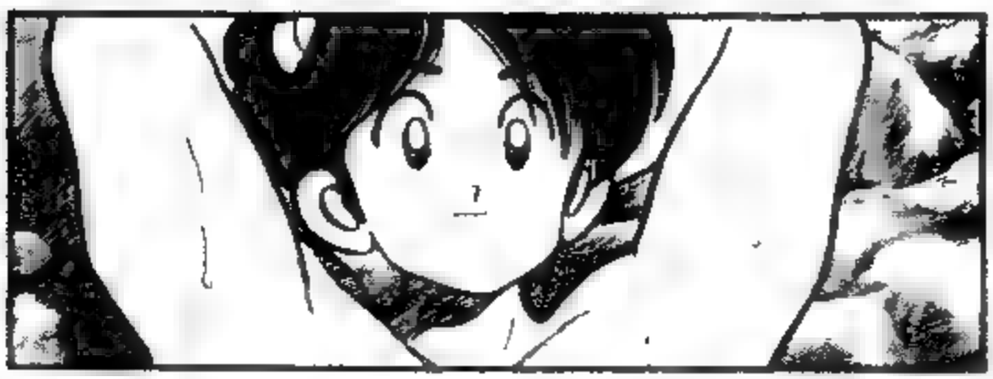
碰！
呼！


ガゴォーン！

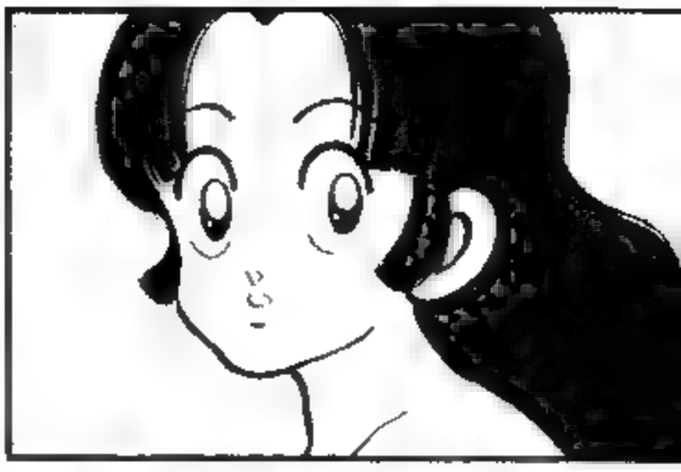


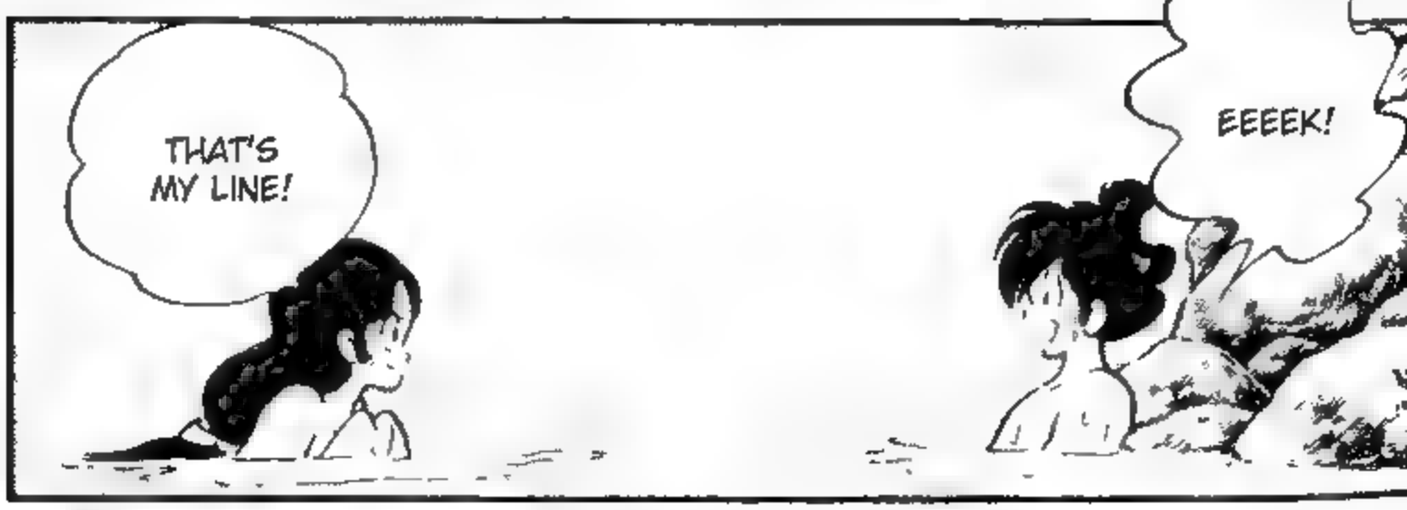


"TONIGHT, IN THIS ROOM..."

WE'RE SIB-LINGS!

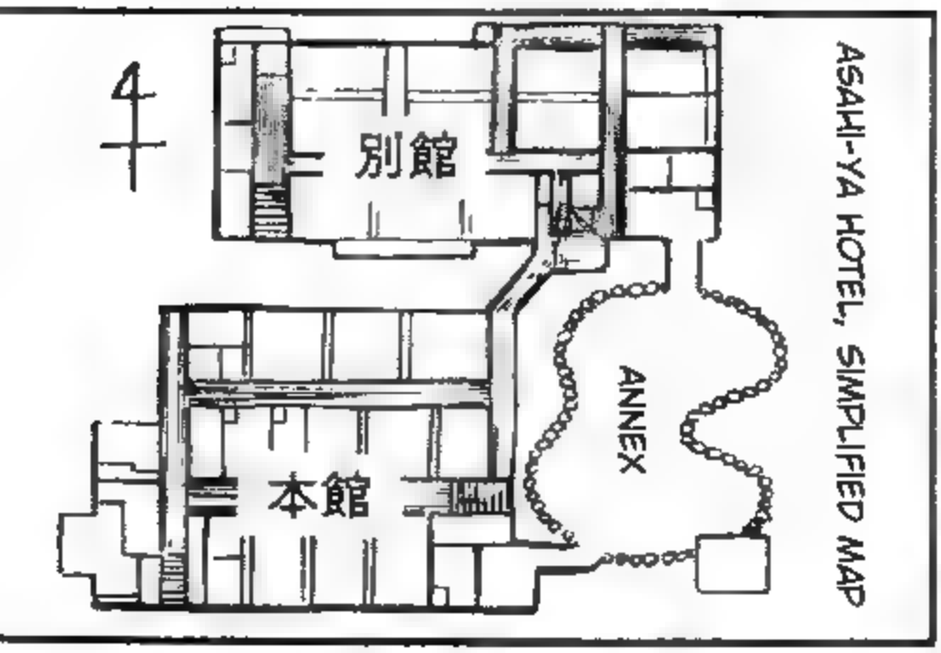
SNAP OUT OF IT!
NOW YOU'RE SEEING THINGS!
GOSH!




THAT'S MY LINE!
EEEEK!

THIS IS THE WOMEN'S BATH!
NO IT ISN'T!
IT SPE-CIFICALLY SAID THE MEN'S BATH OUTSIDE!

I'M EATING DINNER --- WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE I'M DOING?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?



ASAHI-YA HOTEL, SIMPLIFIED MAP

I MADE SURE IT WAS THE WOMEN'S BATH!

WHERE IS THE BATH?

MAKE A RIGHT THERE AND KEEP ON GOING STRAIGHT.

IS IT SEPARATED?

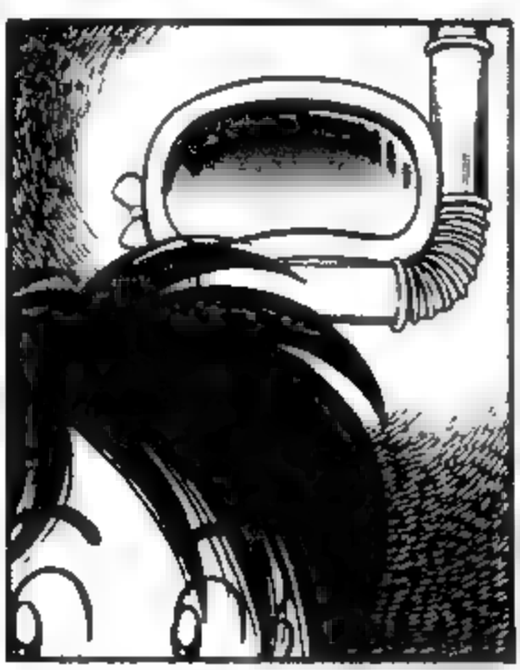
TEE HEE ...

YES, BUT ONLY THE ENTRANCE.

ONLY THE ENTRANCE.

HEHEH.

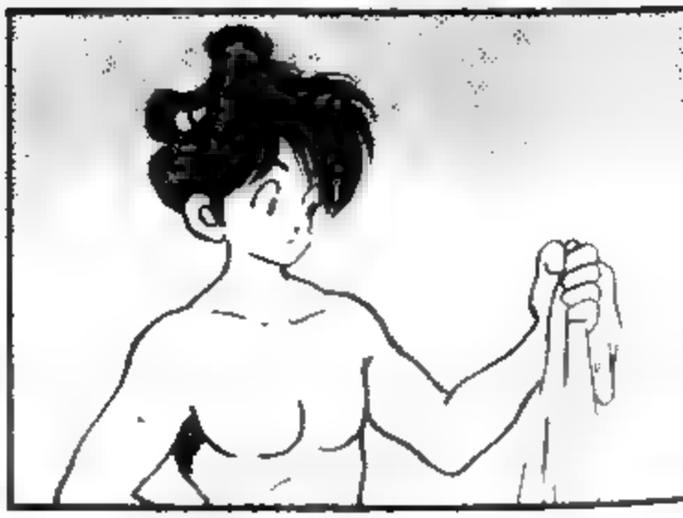
カッコオ――――ン



WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?
N..
NOTHING.
HUH?
ギク
WHERE ARE THE GIRLS?
TEE HEE ...
IF WE GREW UP TOGETHER, WE'D BATHE TOGETHER LIKE THIS A LOT.
NOT AT OUR CURRENT AGES!

呀

I'LL GET RID OF THEM.
WHY DON'T YOU GO BACK TO THE ROOM?



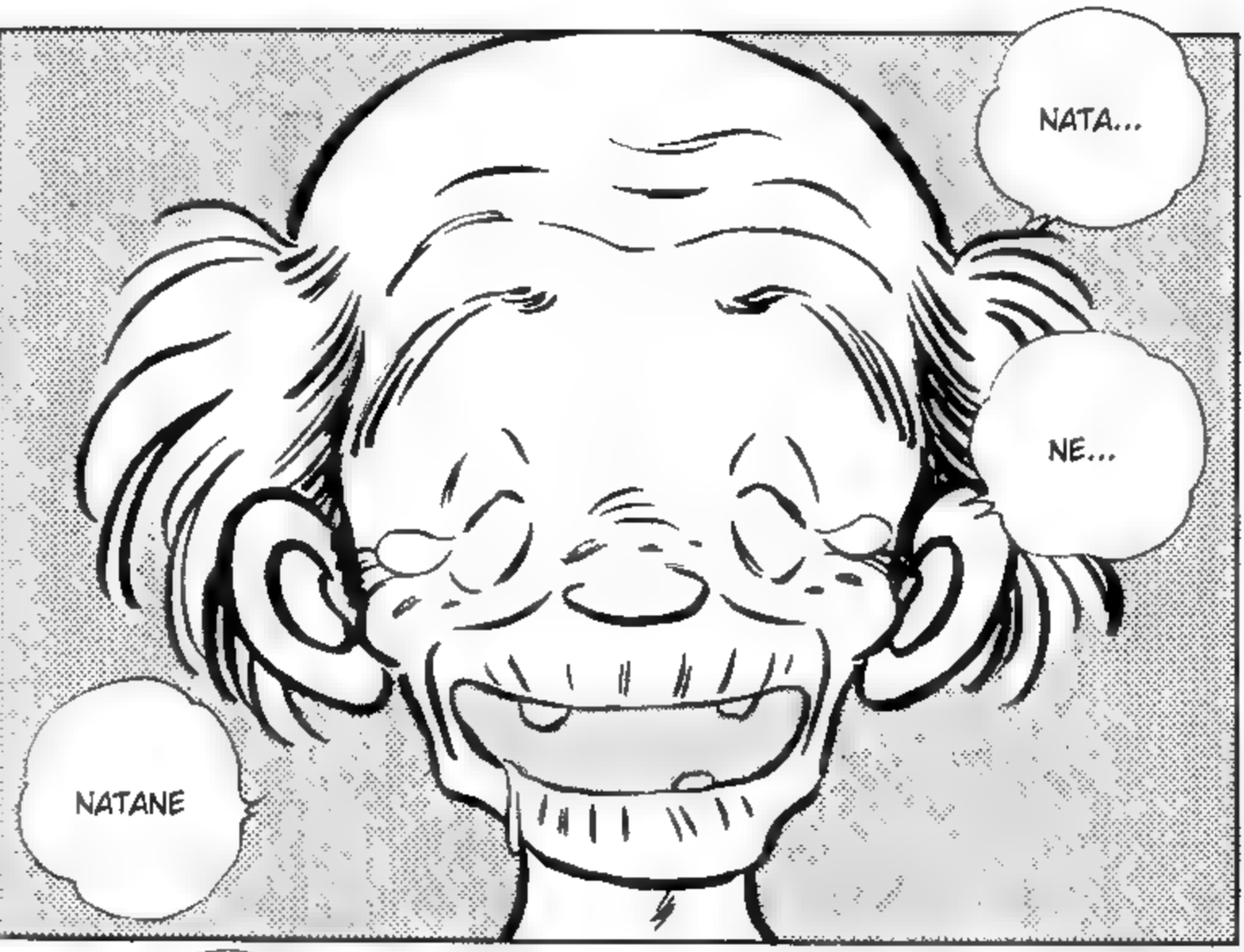
IT'S A HE.
HMPH!
OH?

WHEW!
EXCUSE ME.
IT'S HOT TODAY, ISN'T IT?
バシャ バシャ
WHEW ...
FEELS GREAT.
BATHING UNDER THE MOON.
IT'D BE EVEN BETTER WITH A PRETTY GIRL.
エヘヘ

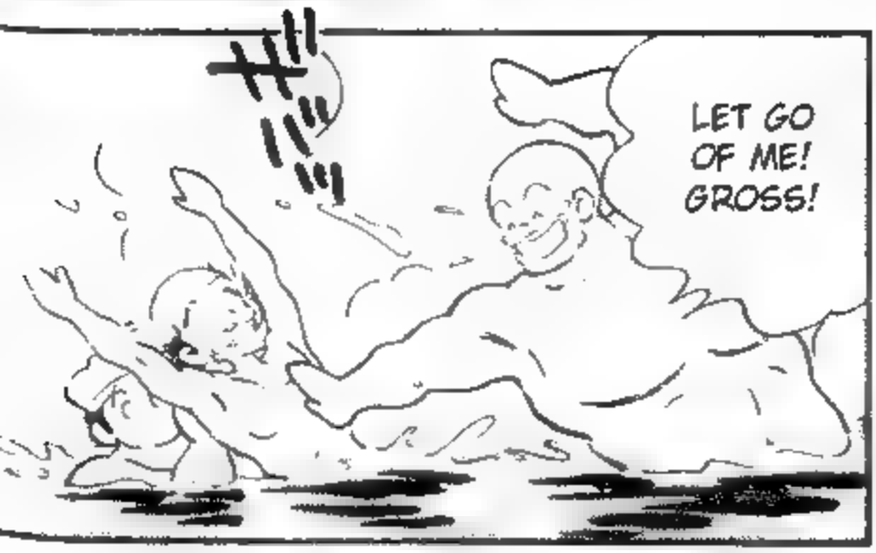
OLD MAN!
ARE YOU OKAY?
RIGHT?
THIS IS A BATH!
DON'T YOU READ NIJI-IRO TOUGA-RASHI?
W... WHERE AM I?
GLURG!
YOU FORGOT AGAIN, DIDN'T YOU, MAW?
I HATE BATHS!
BATH?

カッコ＋ーー！
WHAT'S UP WITH THE OLD MAN?
NOTHING.
DON'T MIND HIM.
WE USED TO BATHE WITH NATANE YEARS AGO.
SURE CAN'T NOW.
YEAH.
NATA
NE
OH
ALMOST LIKE MAGIC, OUR LITTLE NATANE'S GROWN INTO...
A LITTLE BEAUTY.
NATANE
NATA
NE

THE OLD MAN IN
THE MOUNTAINS


NATA...
NE...
NATANE

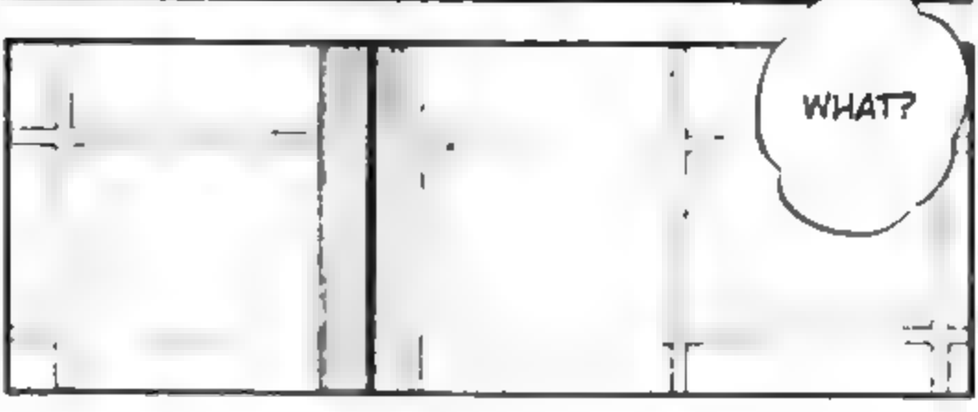
YI-YI-YI!!
なでなで
YOU'RE GROWN SO MUCH!


LET GO OF ME! GROSS!

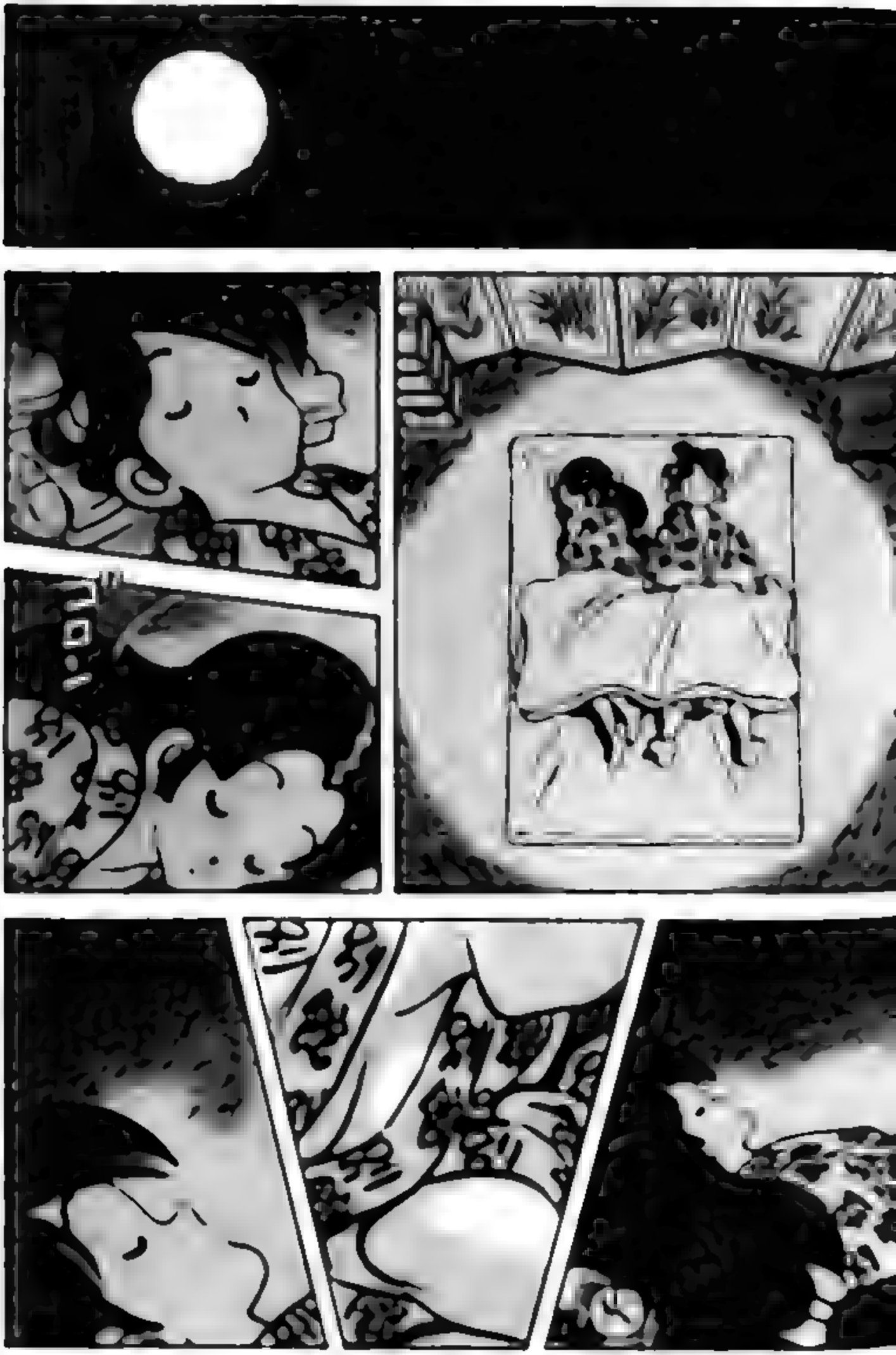
OJIISAN, DO YOU KNOW NATANE?

HUH?
W...
WHERE AM I?
GLURG
YOU FORGOT AGAIN, DIDN'T YOU, MAW?
BATH?
I HATE BATHS!

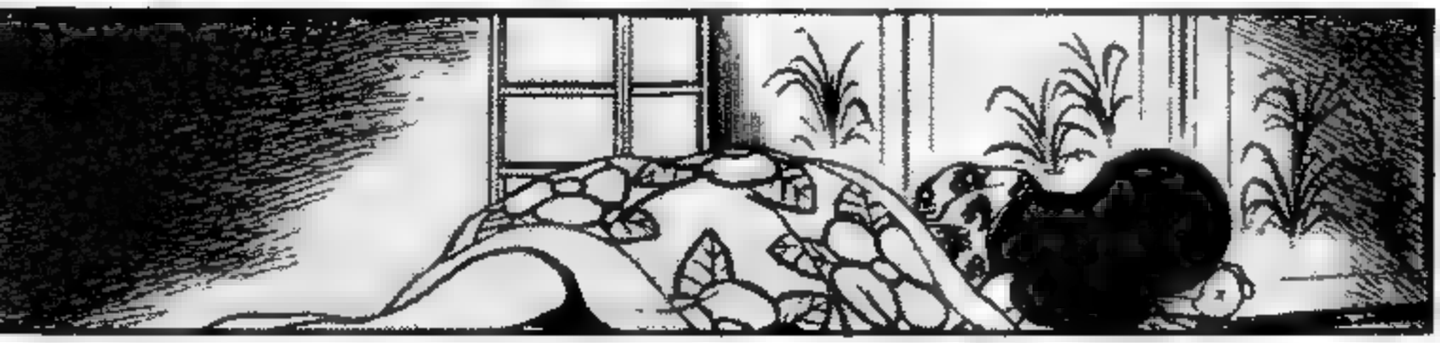
あさひ屋

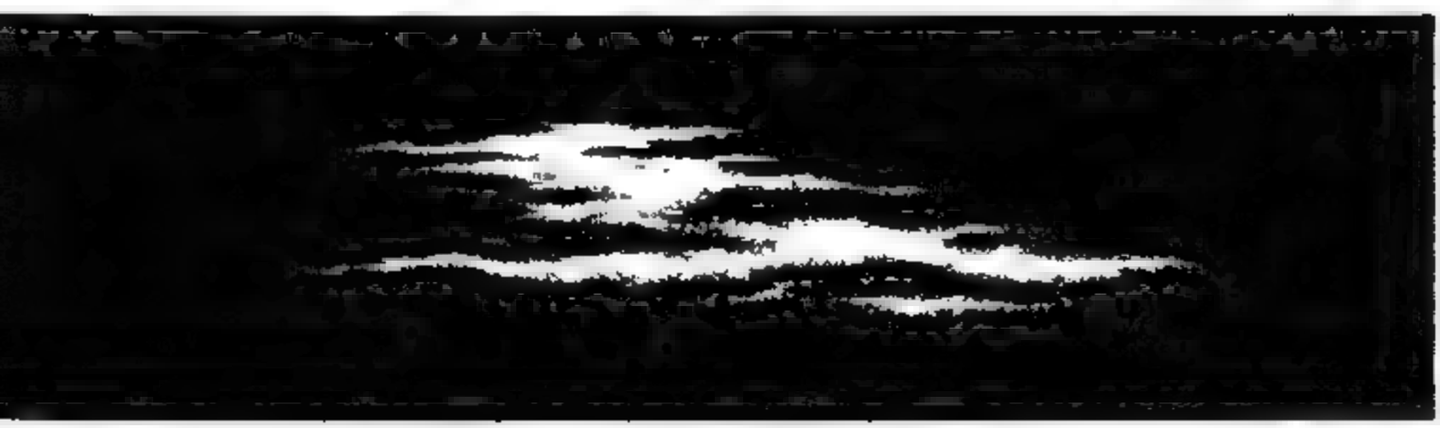

WHAT?

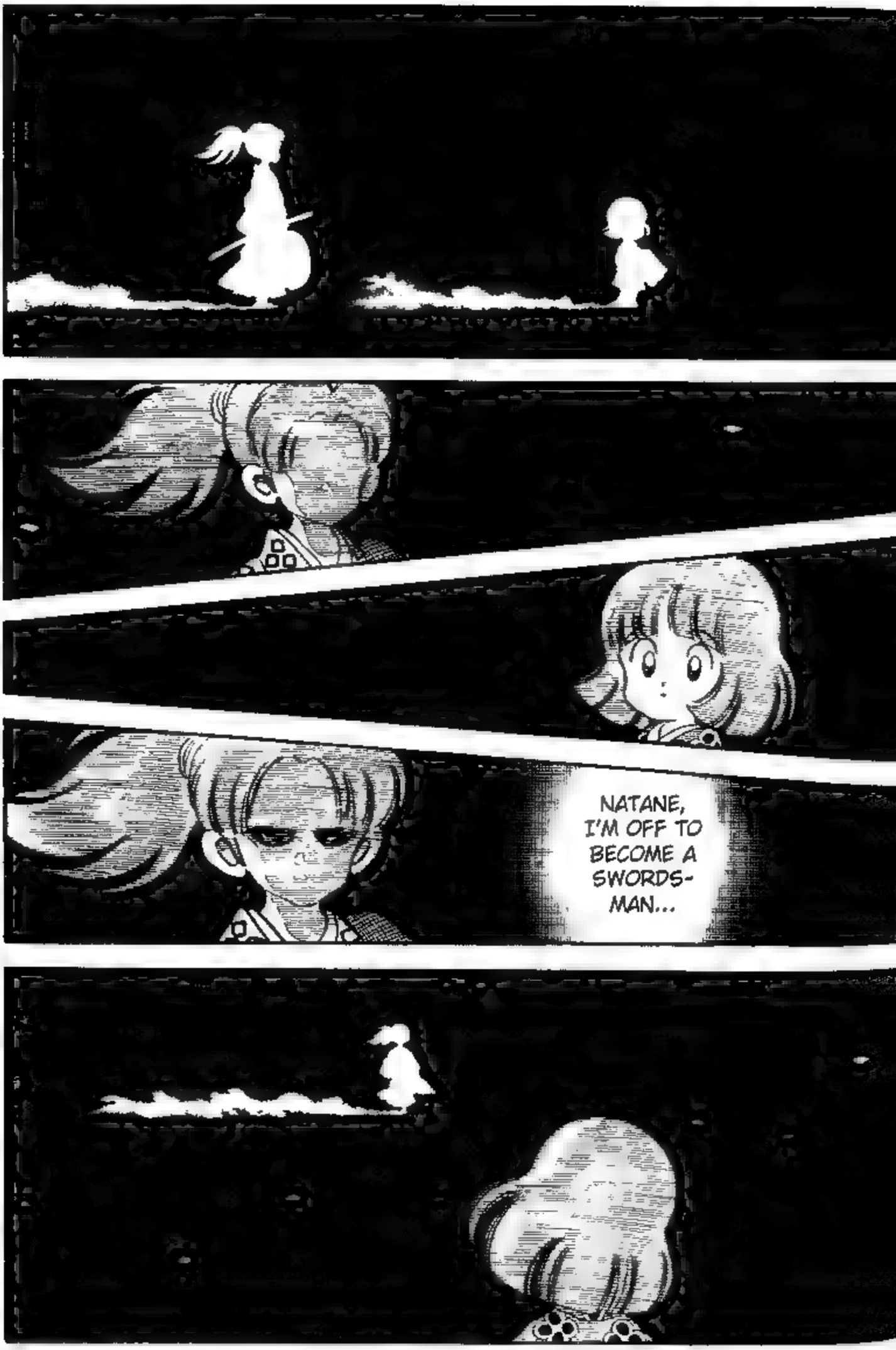
THAT LADY PREPARED ONLY ONE FUTON ANYWAY!
I'LL HAVE A TALK WITH HER.
FORGET IT. LET'S JUST SLEEP TOGETHER.
WE'RE SIBLINGS. WHAT IS THERE TO BE EMBARRASSED OF?
GOOD POINT.

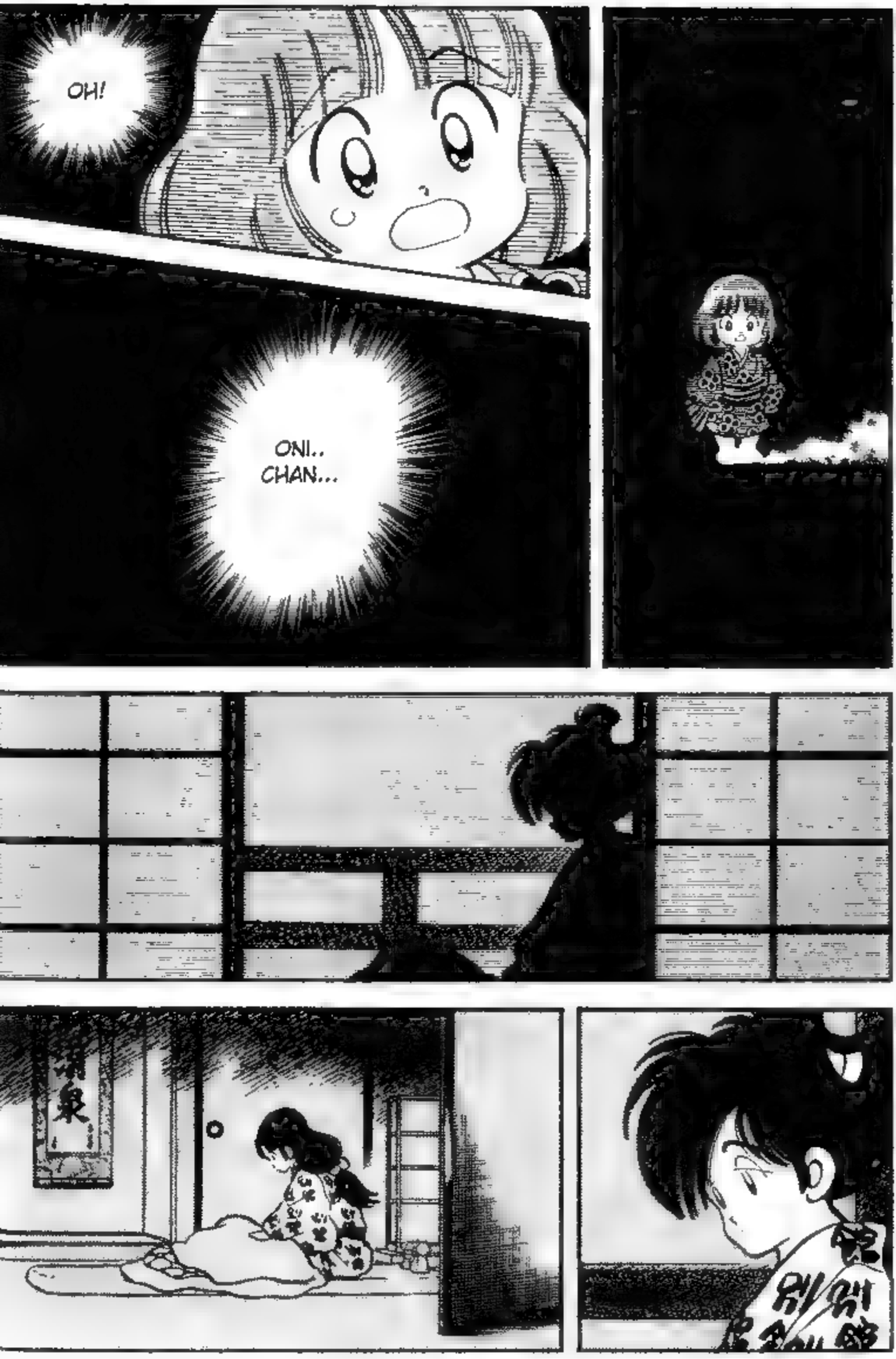


I GUESS SIBLINGS ARE PRETTY UNINTEREST-ING.






NATANE, I'M OFF TO BECOME A SWORDS-MAN...


OH!
ONI..
CHAN...
温泉

YOUR FAVORITE ONE?
WHICH ONE?

ONIISAN?

NO.

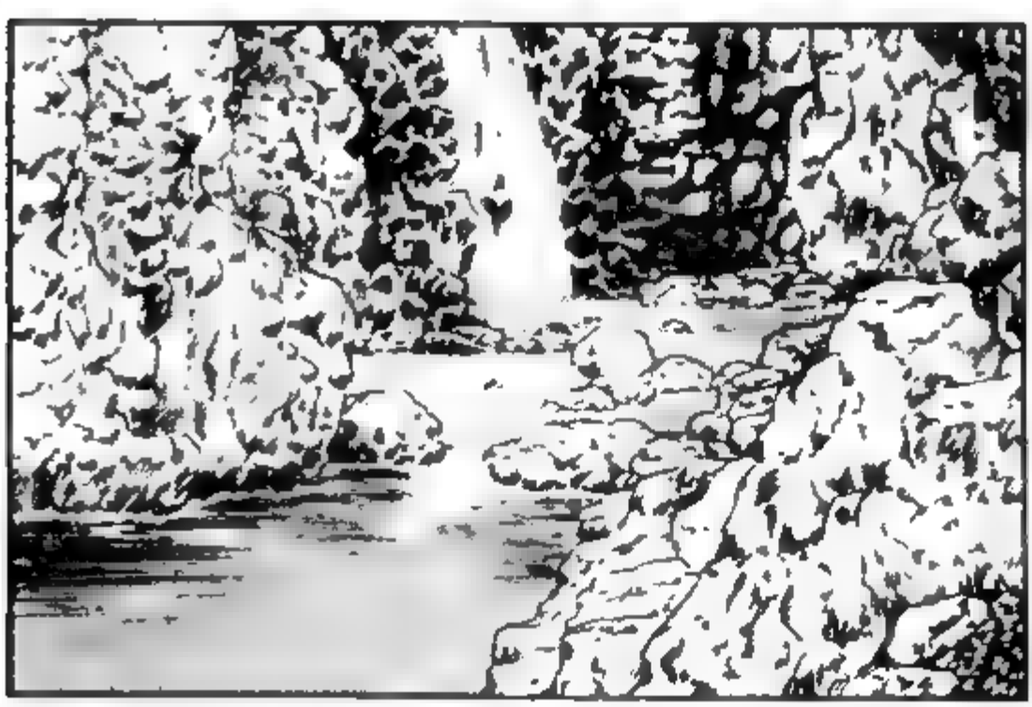
I HAVE THIS DREAM A LOT. SINCE I WAS A CHILD.

I DON'T KNOW WHO HE IS...
BUT HE'S NOT ANY OF YOU.

SIGN: ASAHI-YA ANNEX

I JUST CAME BACK TO LET MY MOTHER REST IN PEACE...
...LET HER KNOW THAT I HAVE SO MANY BROTHERS NEAR ME, THAT I'M LIVING HAPPILY.
EXCEPT THAT I USUALLY WAKE UP SANSHOU AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT TO TELL HIM TO GO PEE!
NOTHING.
WHAT?
OH!
WAAH!!

ヨケヨケヨケヨォー
DIDN'T REALIZE THERE WAS AN ANNEX.
FORGET IT.



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……

NATANE, ARE WE THERE YET?
NOPE.
THIS PLACE IS SURE IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE!
BOOY, YOU SURE KNOW HOW TO PICK A FAR OUT PLACE!
PANT
PANT
ARE WE THERE YET?
PANT
ALMOST!

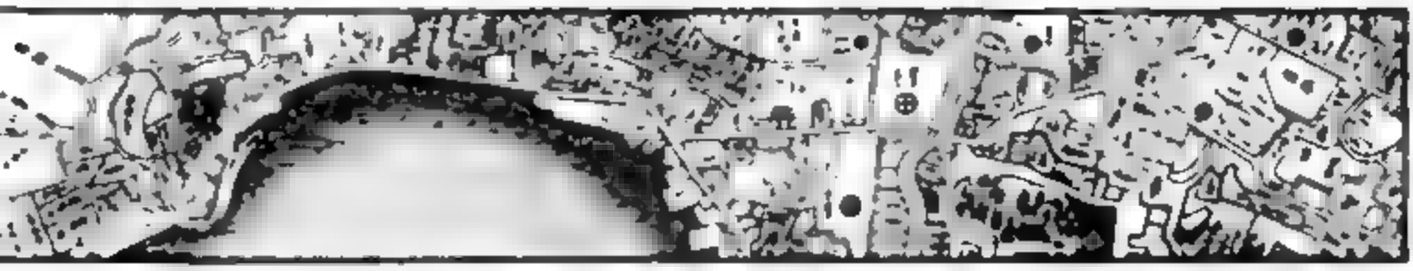
WHOO !!
PANT
PANT
PANT
MUST'VE DRANK TOO MUCH LAST NIGHT.
I... AM... POOPED !!
PANT
PANT
THE HOUSE IS WITHIN SIGHT...!
NO!!
ONLY TWO MORE VALLEYS TO GO!

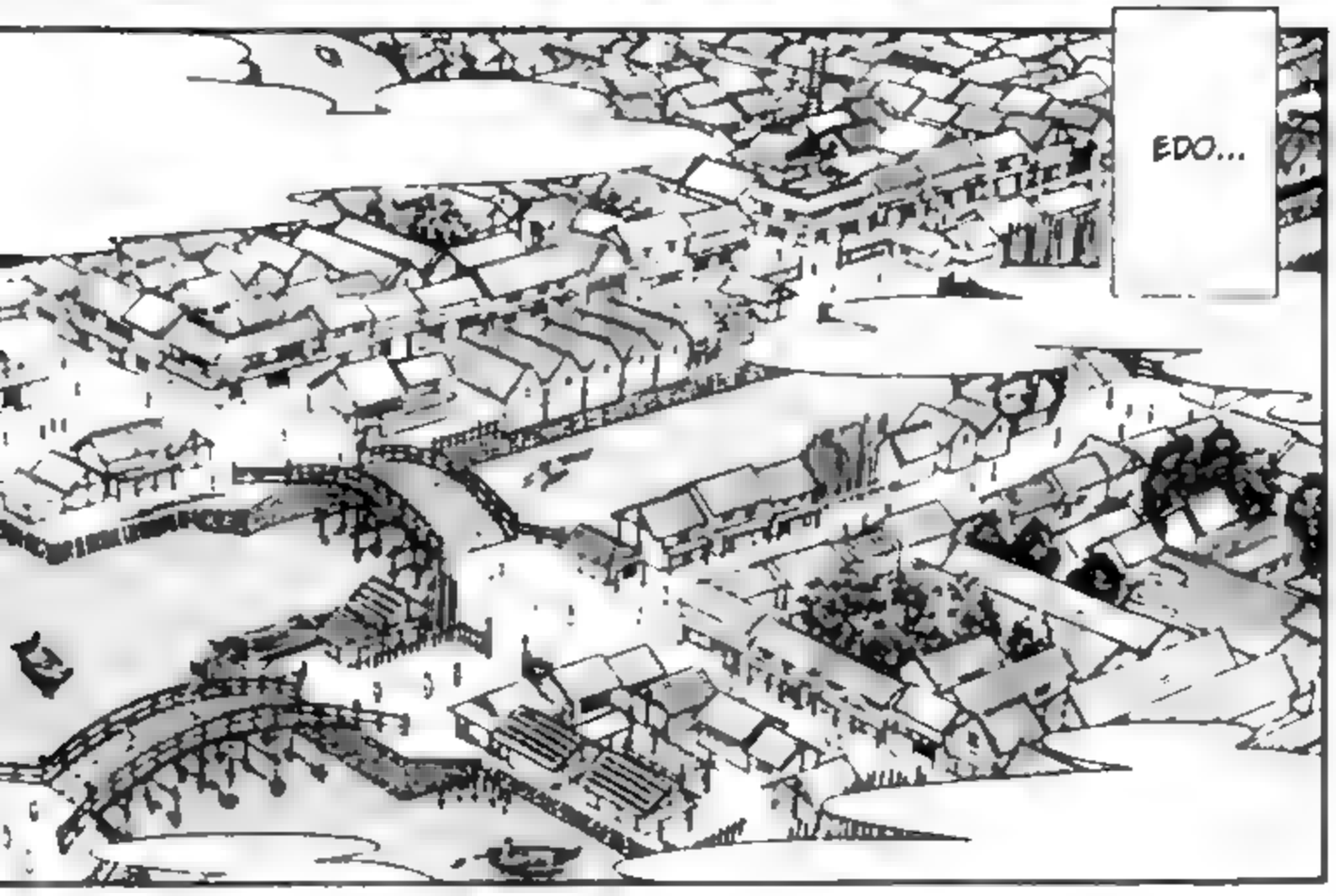
HII
HII
WHY DON'T YOU ALL GO ON AHEAD?
BIG BRO AND I WILL CATCH UP LATER.
LOOK AT THAT OLD MAN. TROTTING LIKE A HORSE.
YOU SHOULD BE MORE LIKE HIM.
FOR SHAME!
OH! THAT FEELS GOOD.
HII
HII

YEAH, HIS BODY IS HALE ENOUGH.
BUT HIS BRAIN'S, WELL, A BIT ADDLED.
DID YOU SAY SOME-THING?
HIM!
BETTER IGNORE HIM.
YOU KNOW HIM?
AND HIS EARS ARE PRETTY SHARP, EH?
OH!
MY SISTER USED TO LIVE THAT-AWAYS. WE'RE GOING THERE TO VISIT.
OH?
WHERE ARE YOU BOYS HEADED?

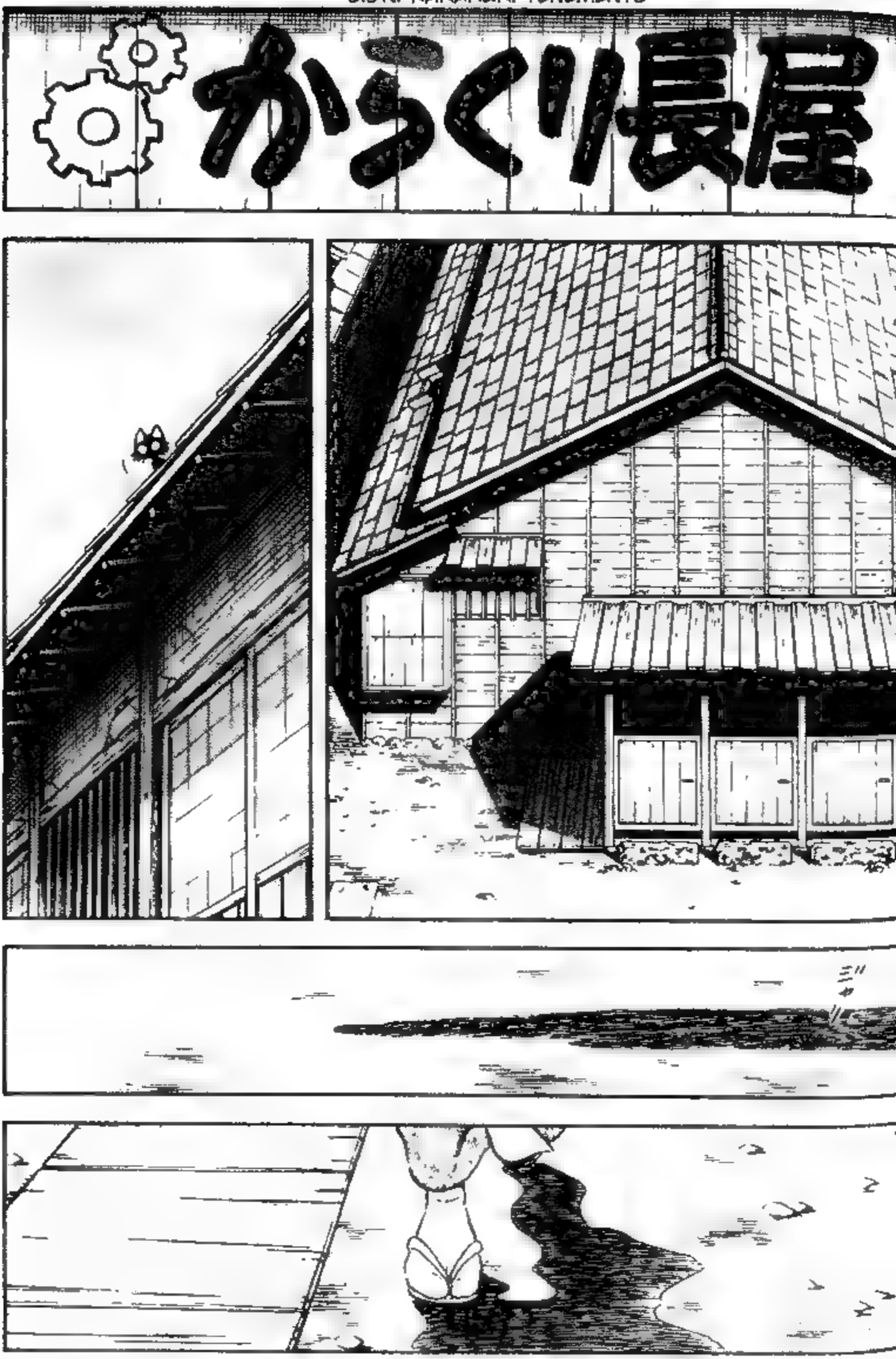
WHAT'S HER NAME?
SISTER?
UM... NATANE.
OH!
NATA...
NE...

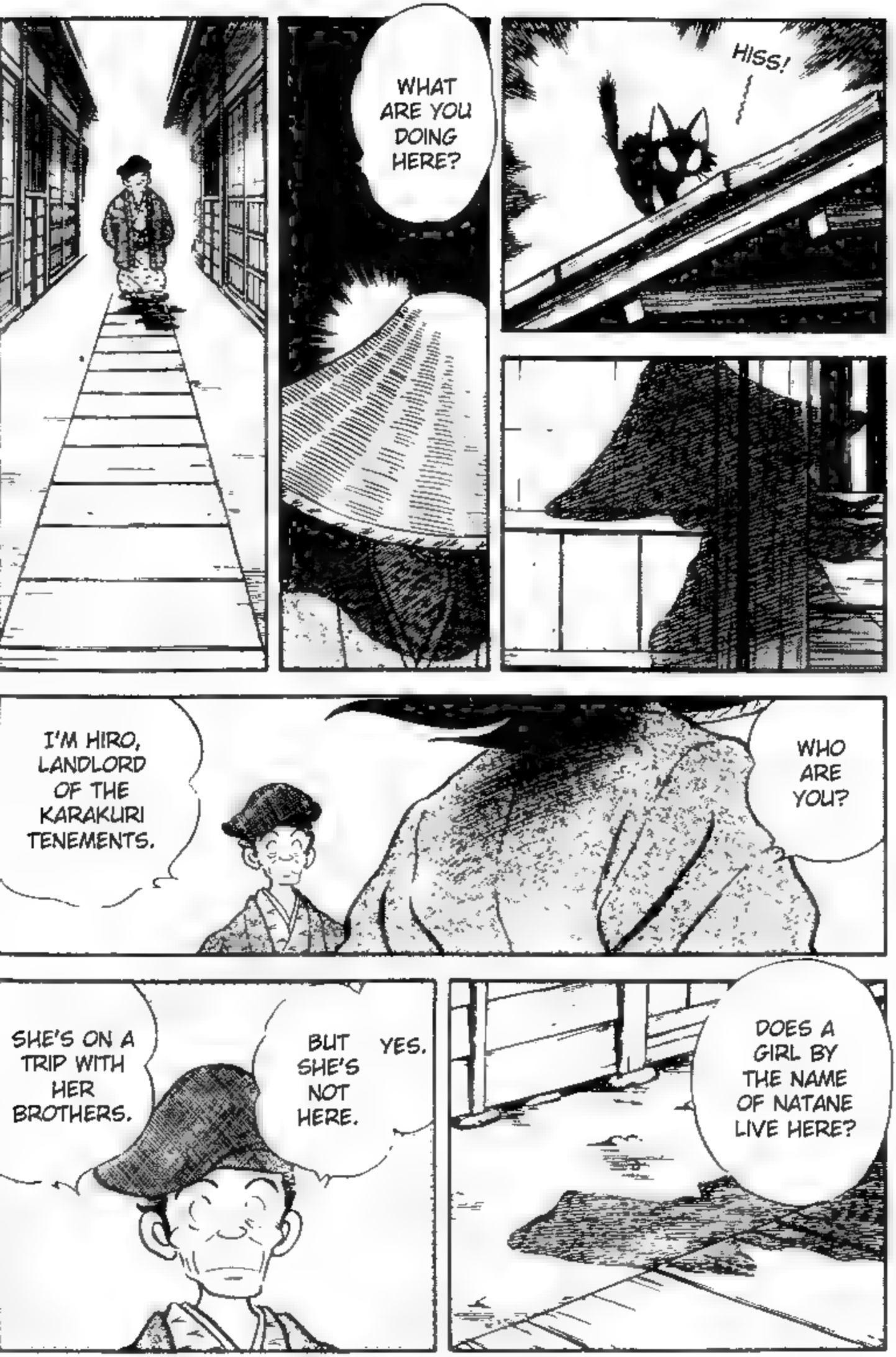
NAJANE, HOW YOU'VE GROWN!




EDO...

SIGN: KARAKURI TENEMENTS

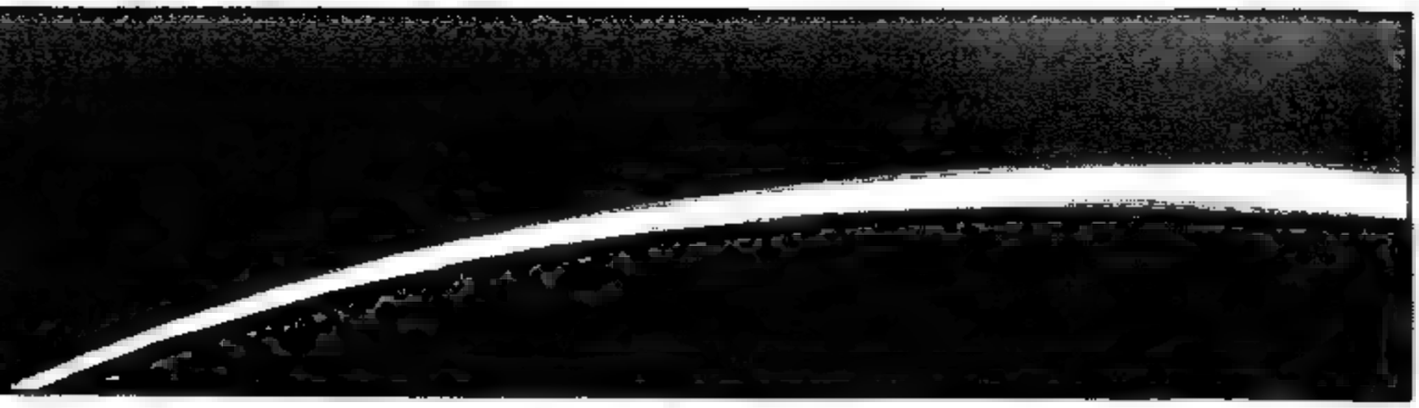


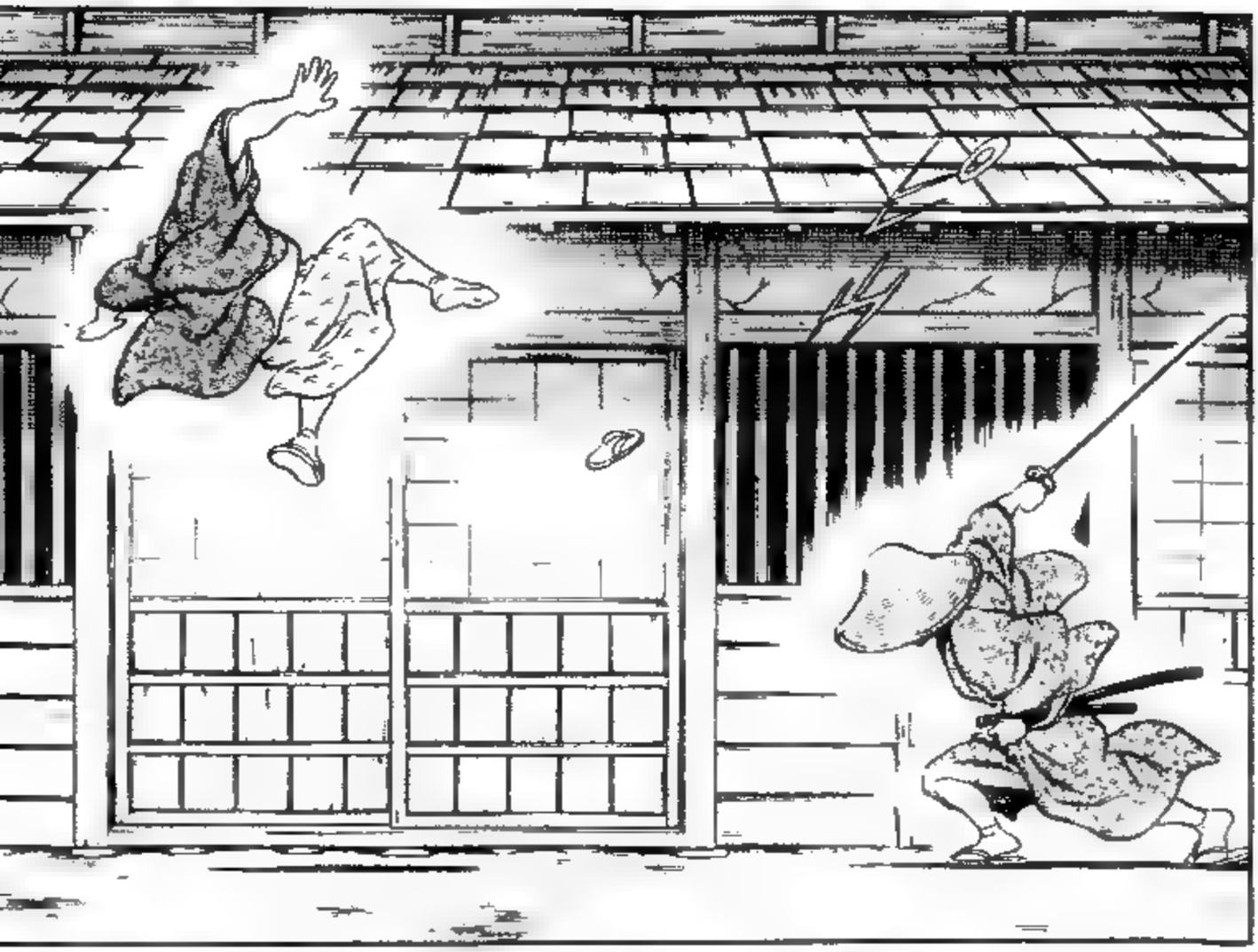

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
HISS!
WHO ARE YOU?
I'M HIRO, LANDLORD OF THE KARAKURI TENEMENTS.
DOES A GIRL BY THE NAME OF NATANE LIVE HERE?
YES.
BUT SHE'S NOT HERE.
SHE'S ON A TRIP WITH HER BROTHERS.

WHAT'S YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO NATANE?
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
HER BROTH-ERS?
WHY DO YOU ASK?

OH!
NOT REALLY ...
HAVE WE MET?

WAIT!
BYE.
AREN'T YOU GOING TO TELL ME WHAT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH NATANE IS?
I'M THE KILLER OF HER FATHER.



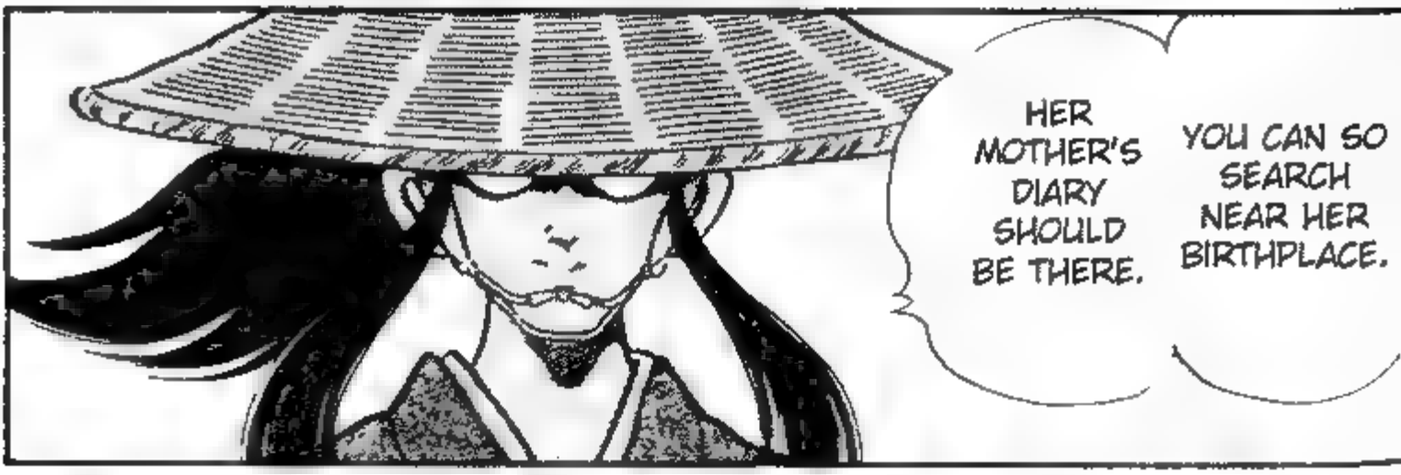


YOU'RE NO ORDINARY LANDLORD.

BELIEVE IT, OR DON'T.

DO YOU HAVE PROOF ?

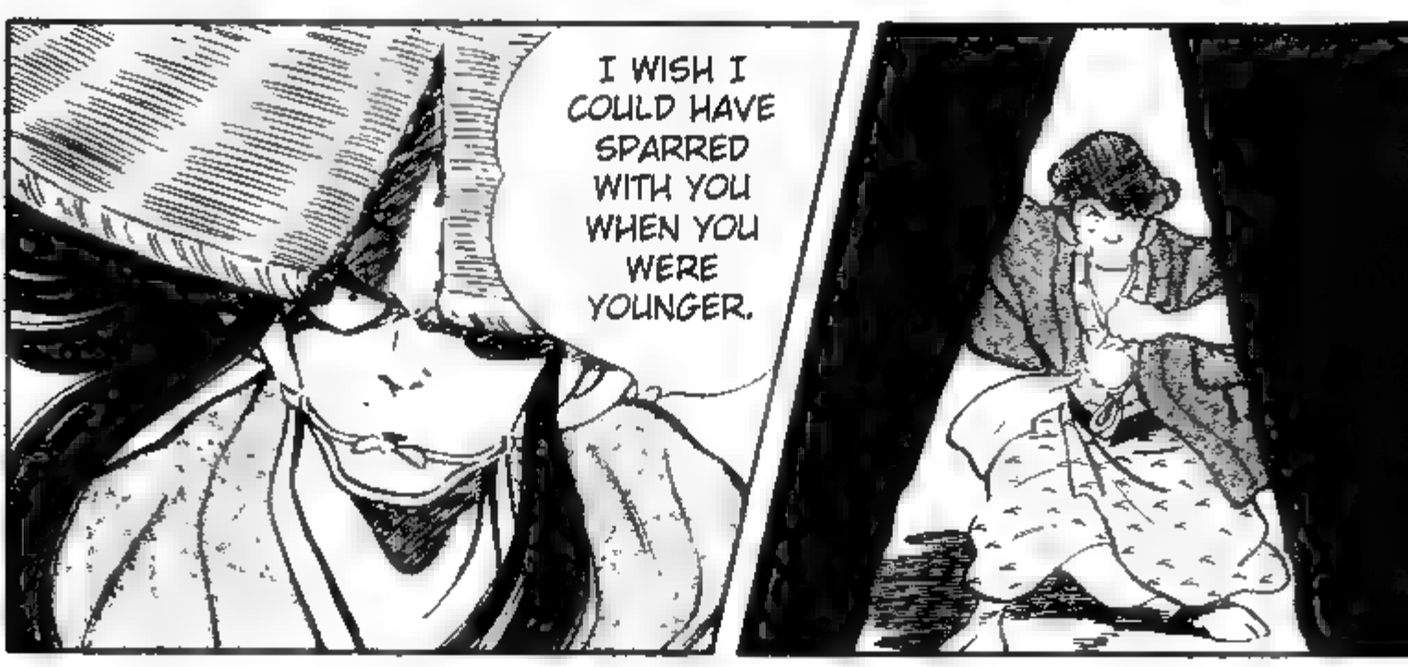
LIAR!
YOU KILLED HER FATHER ?


HER MOTHER'S DIARY SHOULD BE THERE.
YOU CAN SO SEARCH NEAR HER BIRTHPLACE.

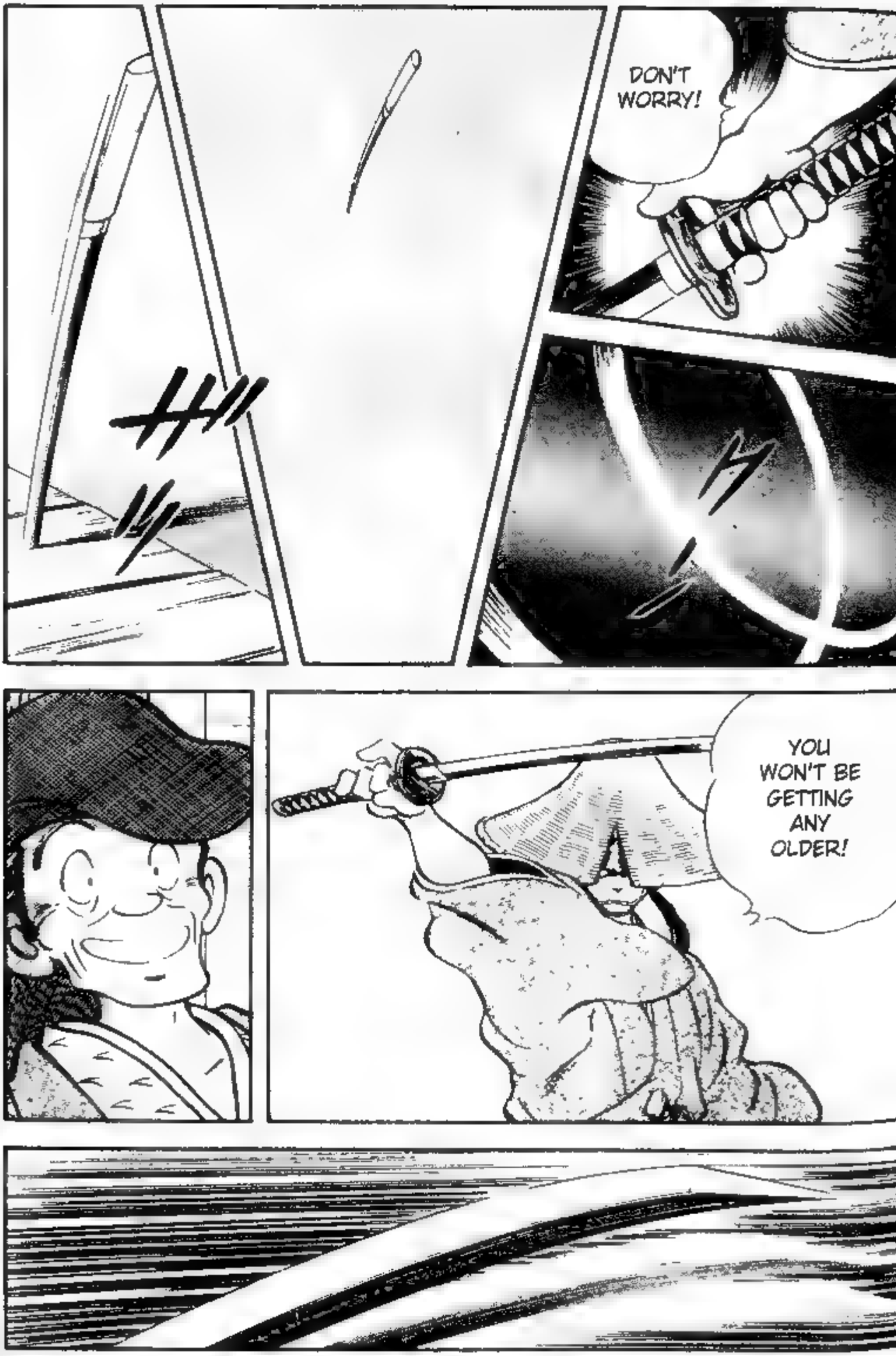
ONE OF THEM SHOULDN'T BE HIS CHILD.
IF THE SHOGUN'S MEMORY IS CORRECT,

Scan By Join

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
IF I DON'T KILL YOU TODAY, YOU'LL HARM NATANE IN THE FUTURE.
PROBABLY.


I WISH I COULD HAVE SPARRED WITH YOU WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER.

I WISH I DIDN'T HAVE TO GET SO OLD!
PANT
HMPH!
PANT

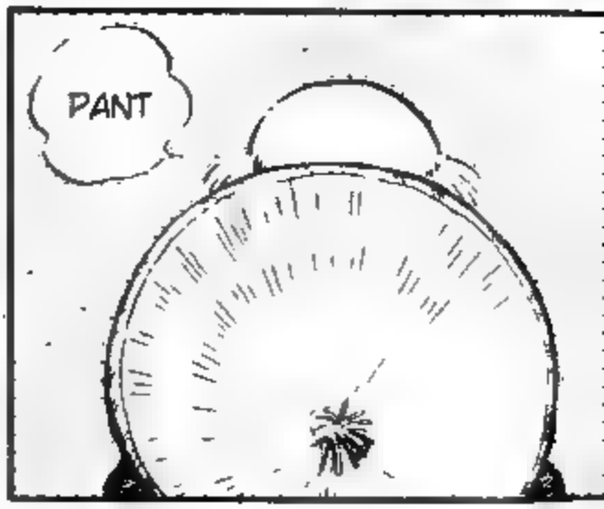

DON'T WORRY!
YOU WON'T BE GETTING ANY OLDER!

ASAJIROU!

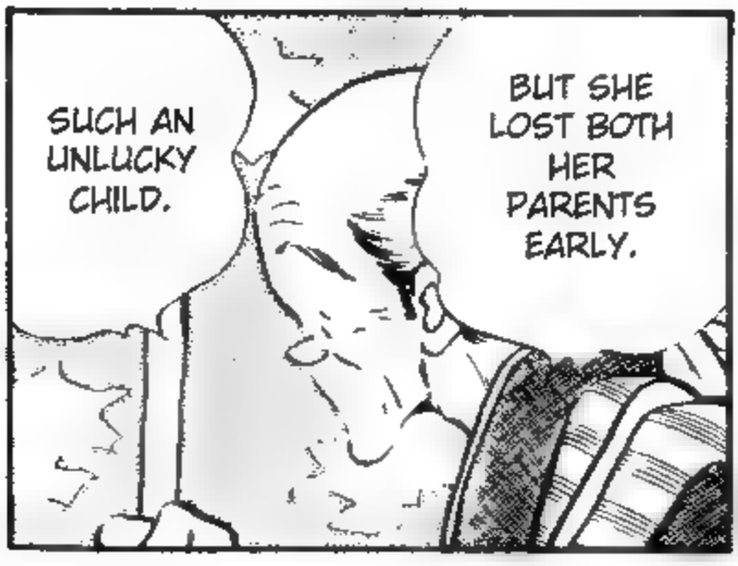
NATA...
NE.
SIGH.
OJII-SAN!
FINA-
LLY,
SHE
GREW
UP.

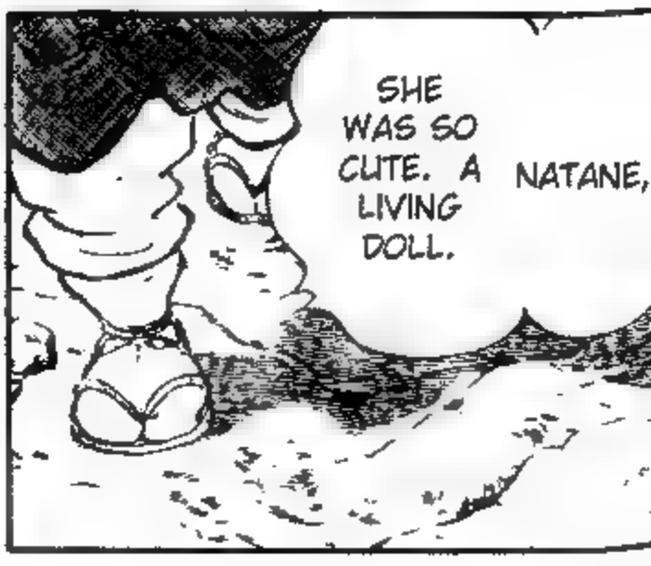
YOU WERE LEADING!
HEY! WHAT'RE YOU DOING? THIS IS THE WRONG PATH!

DID YOU REALLY KNOW NATANE?


PANT

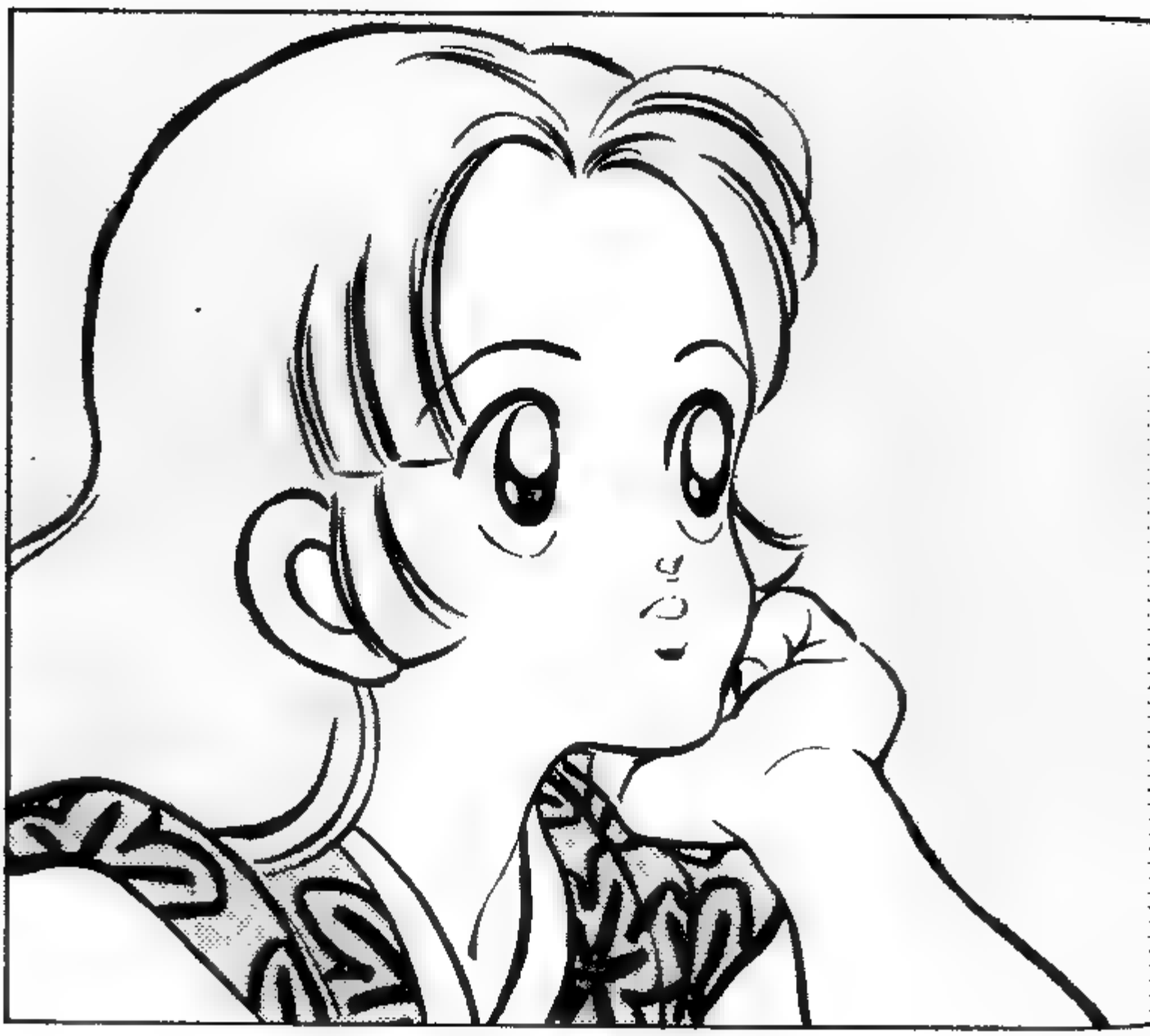
SHUT UP!
NE NATA- LITTLE BEAU- TIFUL
NE... NATA ...
!


SUCH AN UNLUCKY CHILD.
BUT SHE LOST BOTH HER PARENTS EARLY.


SHE WAS SO CUTE. A LIVING DOLL.
NATANE,

BOTH?
HER PARENTS?
TRAG-EDIC ACCI-DENT?
IT WAS SUCH AN UNSPEAKABLE TRAGEDIC ACCIDENT...
YES ...
.....
WHAT KIND OF TRAGEDY?
A HOR-RIBLE, UNSPEAK-ABLE TRAGEDY!
YES,
HEY!!
AN UNSPEAKABLE ONE!

THIS IS WHERE



I WAS BORN

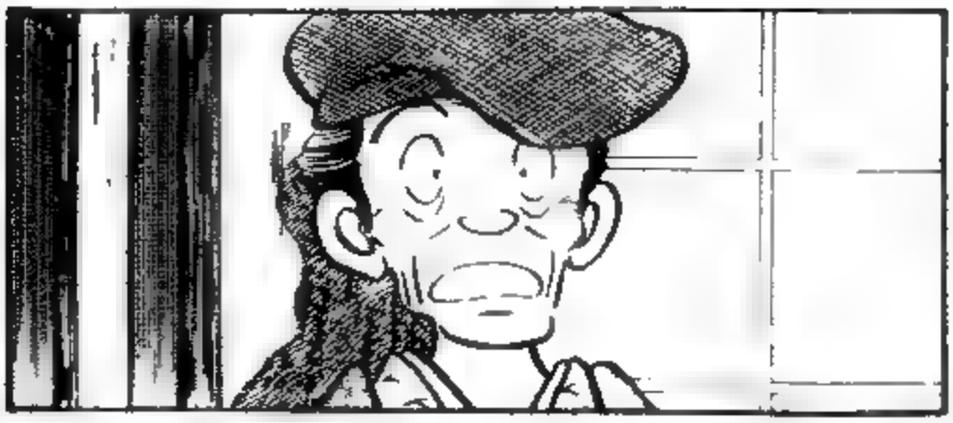
THIS IS NATANE'S BROTHER, TOO?
SAVE THE GREET-INGS FOR LATER!
HOW'VE YOU BEEN, LANDLORD HIRO?
I, ASAJIROU, AM BACK!
HI!

NATANE CERTAINLY CAN'T HAVE ANY ELDER BROTHERS, LET ALONE YOUNGER BROTHERS.
HOW STRANGE.
SEVEN SIBLINGS, ALL THE SAME FATHER?
ASAJIROU! KILL HIM QUICKLY!
FOR HER FATHER'S ALREADY BEEN...
HE LOOKS VERY TOUGH TO BEAT.
LAND-LORD HIRO?
THAT'S WHY I'M ASKING YOU TO KILL HIM!
I KNOW!

ﾆｬｰ!

WELL?
THAT WAS ONLY HALF OF MY SKILL.

MOST PEOPLE OVERESTIMATE THEIR OWN SKILLS.
IF YOU REALLY THINK SO, THEN THIS FIGHT IS POINTLESS.



HMPH!

WELL, I DON'T FEEL TOO DEJECTED ...

DIDN'T EXPECT TO LOSE TO A SCRUFFY KID.

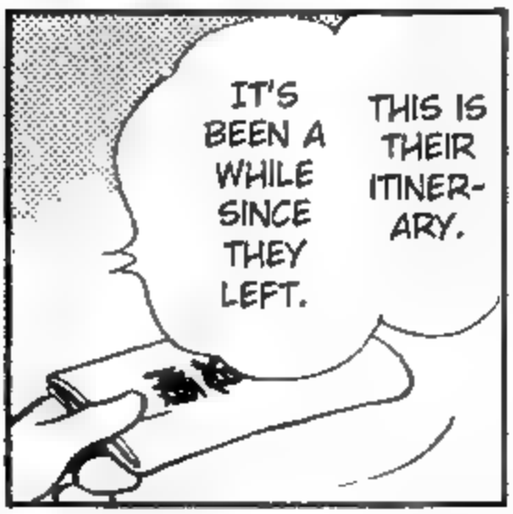
YOU SEEM HAPPIER THAN THAT.

LOOK!
IT'S ASAJIROU!
WHERE DID YOU GO OFF TO, ANYWAY?
YOU CAD!
LEAVING WITHOUT TELLING US!
OW! THAT HURTS!
DID YOU READ MY LETTER?
ASAJI-ROU!
WHEE!
IT IS!
HEAVENS!
LET ME BANDAGE IT!
NO, ME!
OH!
YOUR FACE IS BLEED-ING!

UH...
YEAH.
UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN.

coo !
coo !

OH!
AH!

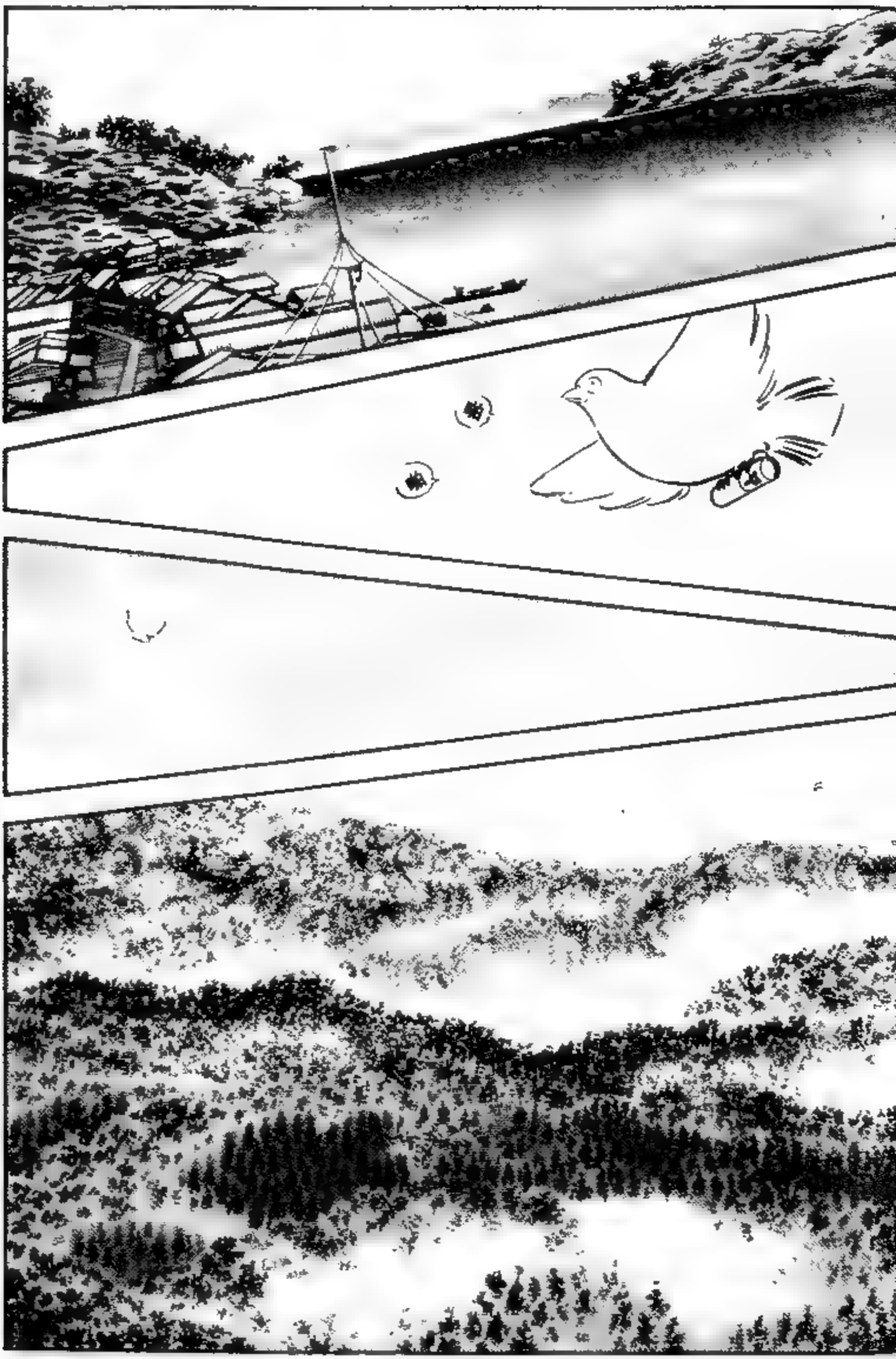

IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE THEY LEFT.
THIS IS THEIR ITINER-ARY.

SO...
WHERE ARE THEY?

AT NATANE'S BIRTH-PLACE.

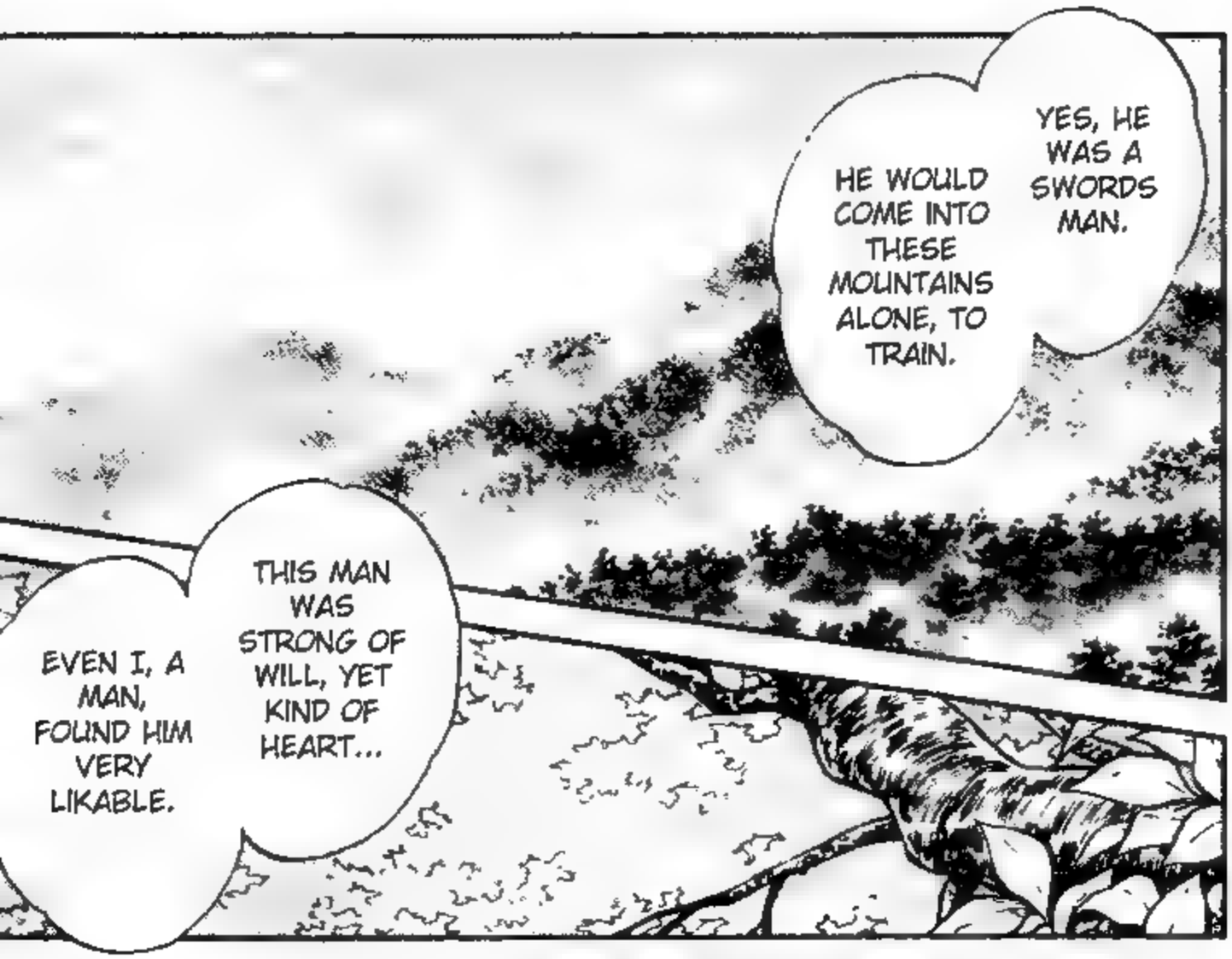
IF THEY'RE ON SCHEDULE, THEY SHOULD BE...

yawn
REALLY... AND JUST WHEN I GOT HOME, TOO.

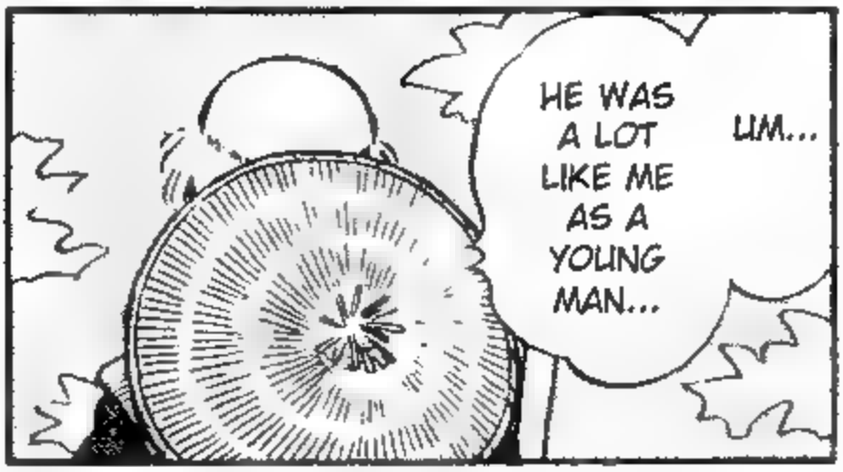


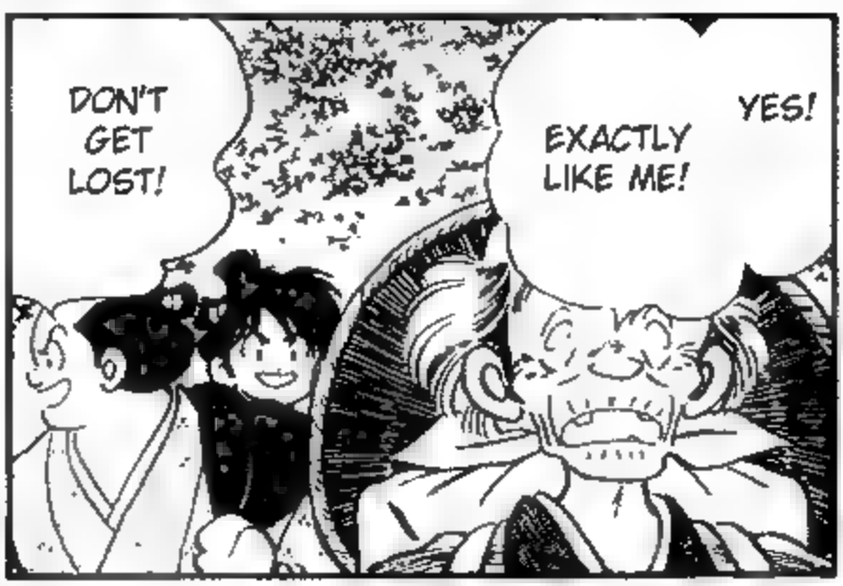
OH!
OJII-SAN...
IS THIS REALLY A SHORT CUT?
HEH!
MUST BE LOST AGAIN!
DAMN!
I REMEMBER ABOUT NATANE'S FATHER!
WHERE THE SHORT CUT IS?
I REMEMBER!
NO, NOT THAT.

COO
COO


YES, HE WAS A SWORDS MAN.
HE WOULD COME INTO THESE MOUNTAINS ALONE, TO TRAIN.
THIS MAN WAS STRONG OF WILL, YET KIND OF HEART...
EVEN I, A MAN, FOUND HIM VERY LIKABLE.

HE MET A WOMAN WHO LEFT EVERYTHING BEHIND HER TO RAISE A CHILD - TAKI.
BUT LATER ...

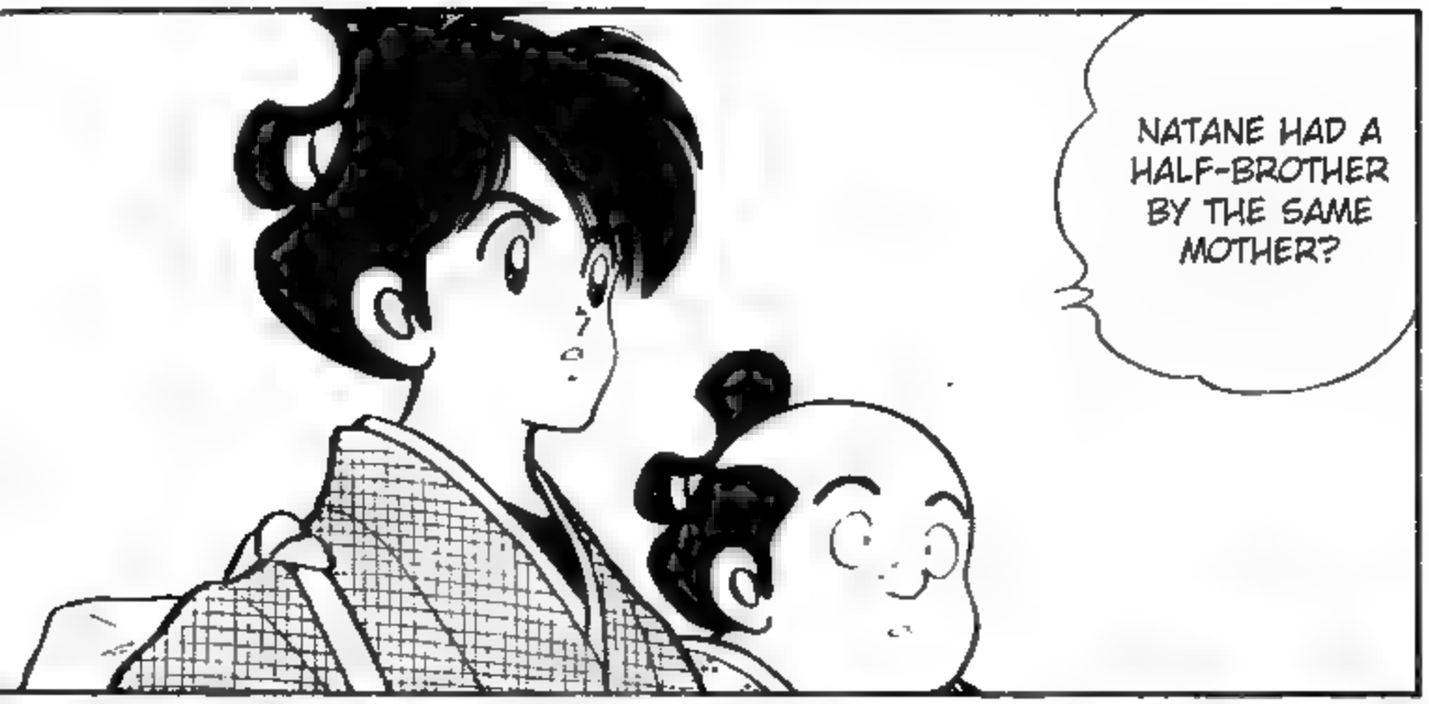

HE WAS A LOT LIKE ME AS A YOUNG MAN...
UM...

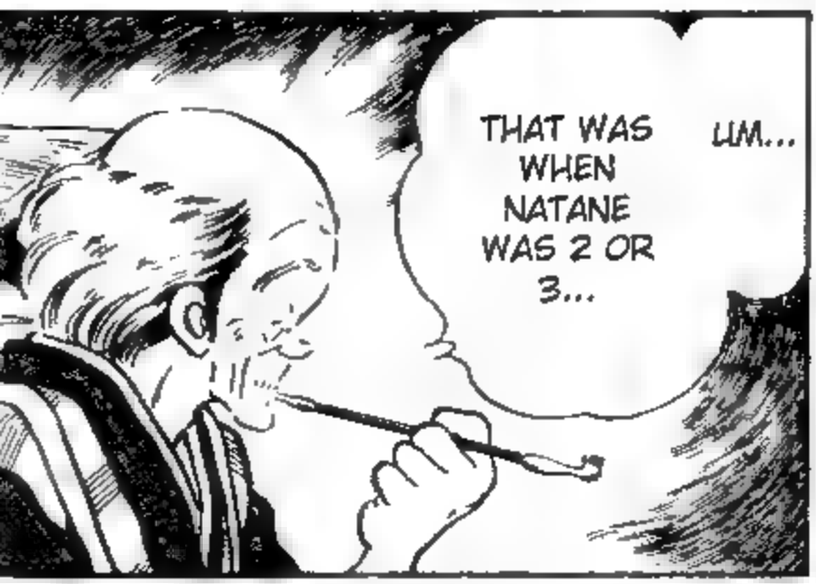

DON'T GET LOST!
EXACTLY LIKE ME!
YES!

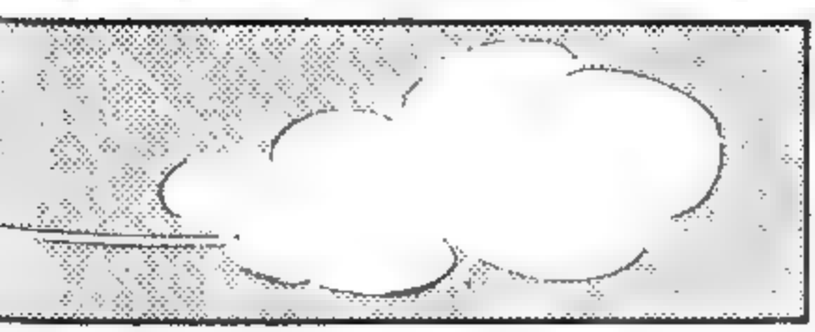
IT STARTED OUT AS JUST VISITS,
THEN MENIAL WORK,
THEN HE EVEN TAUGHT HER SON SWORD-PLAY...
THE THREE OF THEM DINED TOGETHER ...
A BOY?
AND THEN ...
NATANE WAS BORN.
WAIT!
?

HERE!
THIS IS MY HOME...
THIS IS IT!

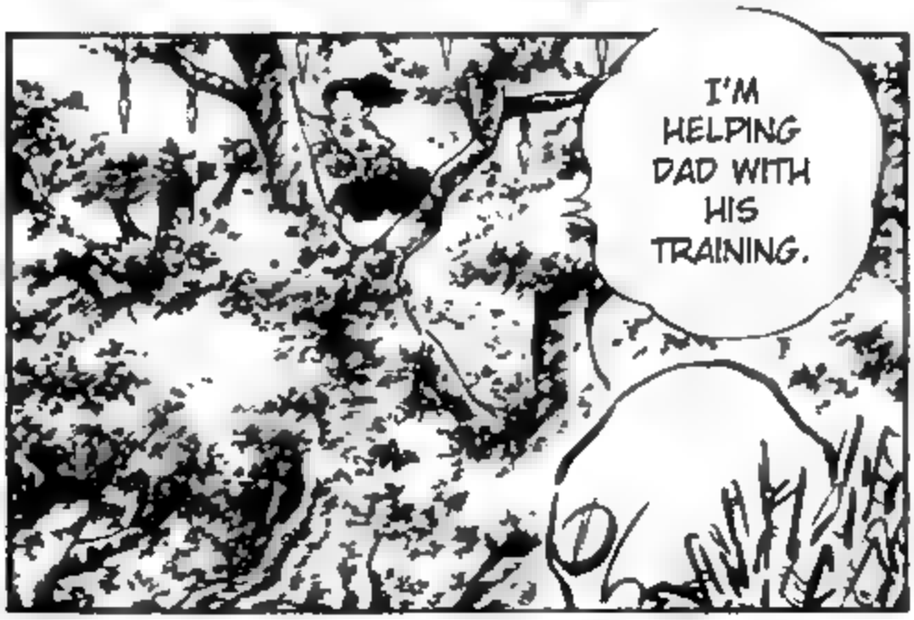
THE TRAGIC ACCIDENT

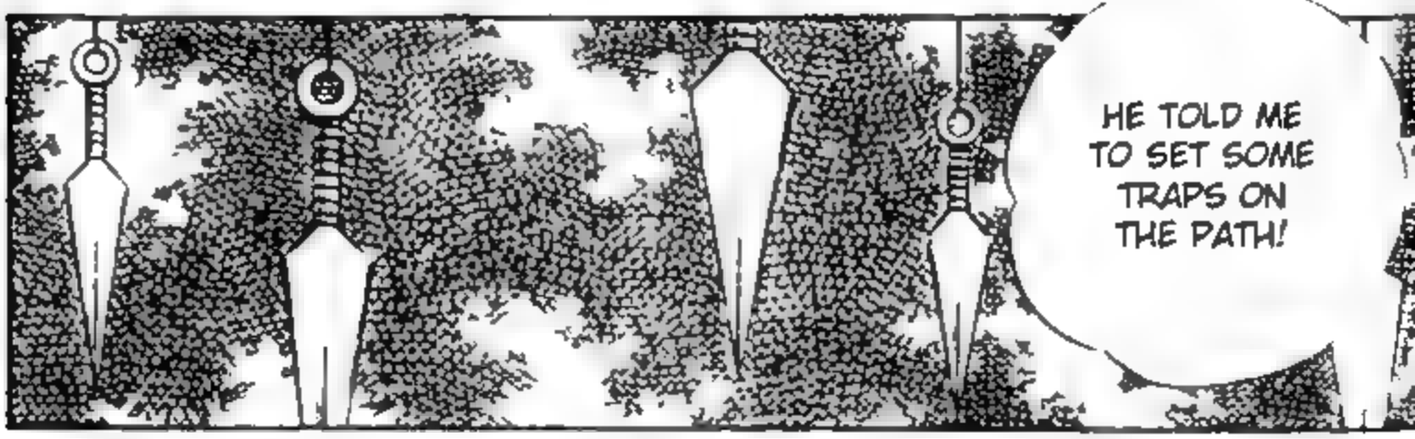

NATANE HAD A HALF-BROTHER BY THE SAME MOTHER?


UM...
THAT WAS WHEN NATANE WAS 2 OR 3...

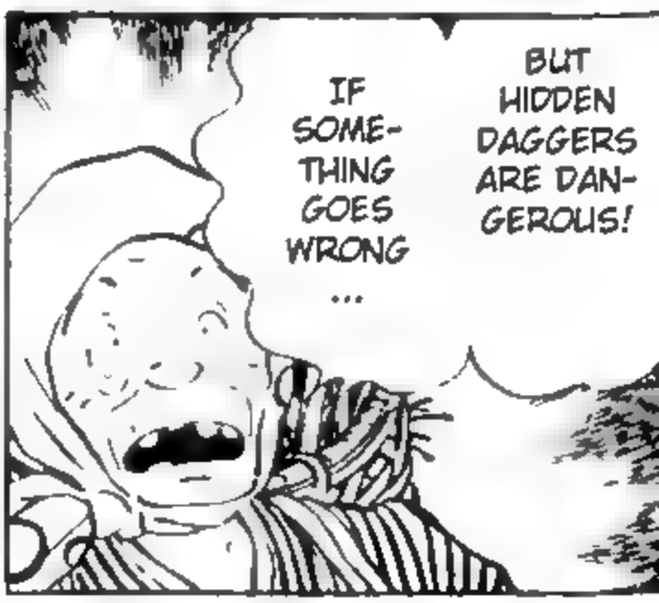


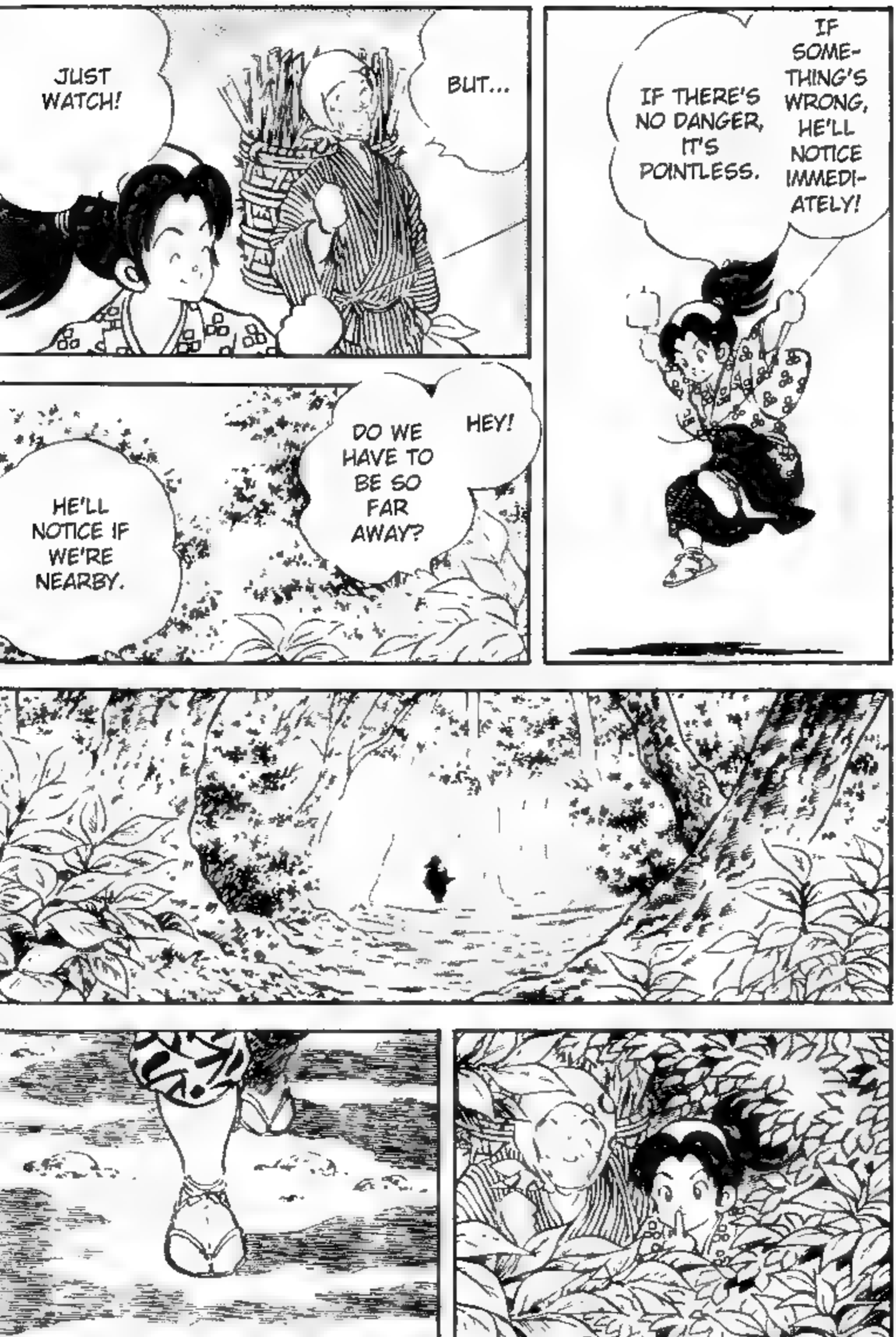
KID! WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?


I'M HELPING DAD WITH HIS TRAINING.

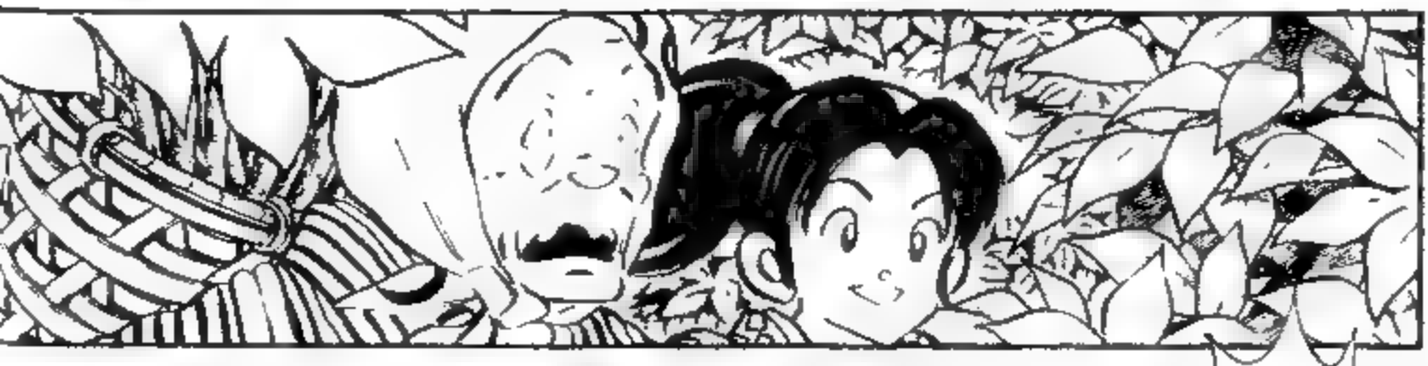

HE TOLD ME TO SET SOME TRAPS ON THE PATH!

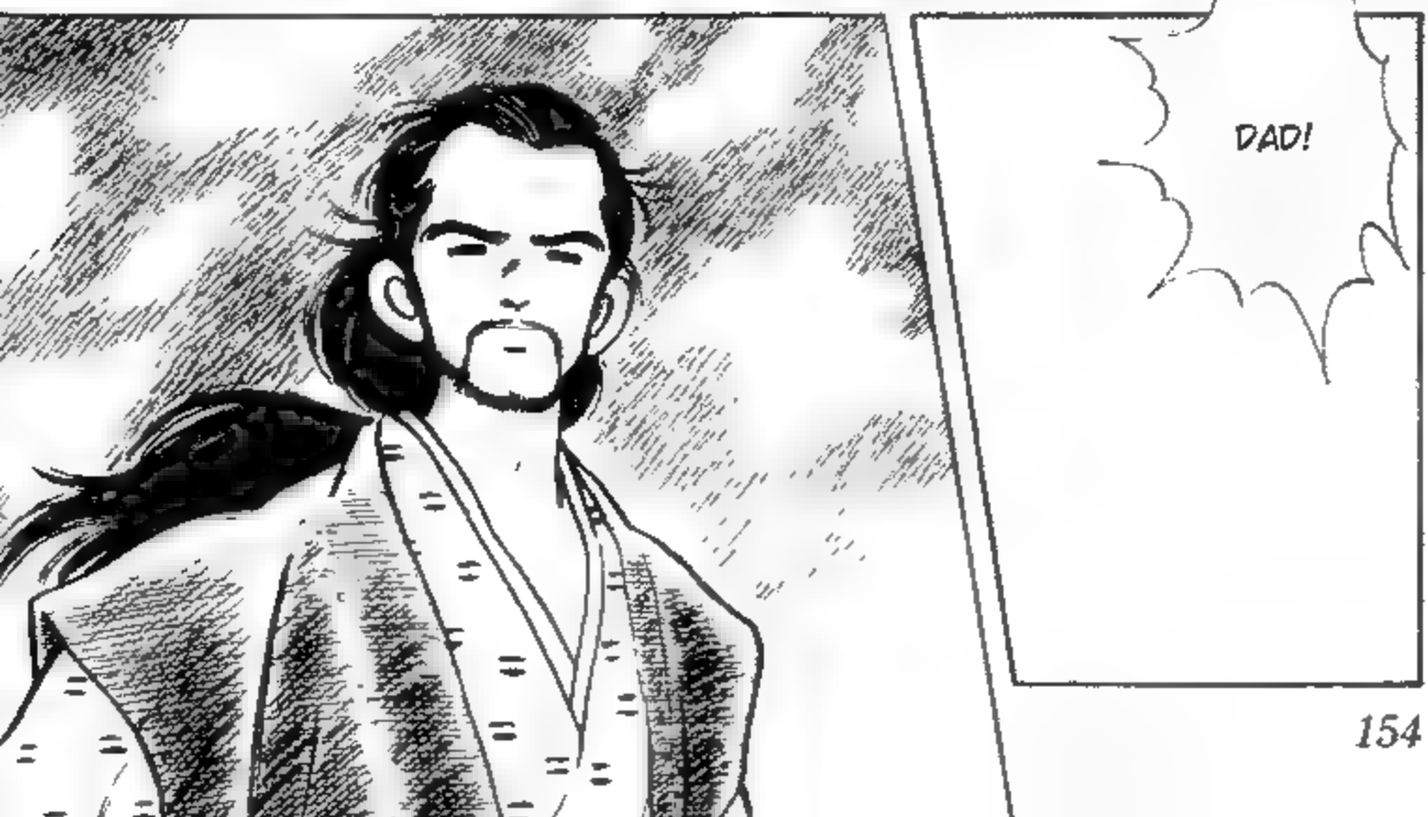
DON'T WORRY. MY DAD CAN HANDLE ANYTHING.


IF SOME-THING GOES WRONG ...
BUT HIDDEN DAGGERS ARE DAN-GEROUS!

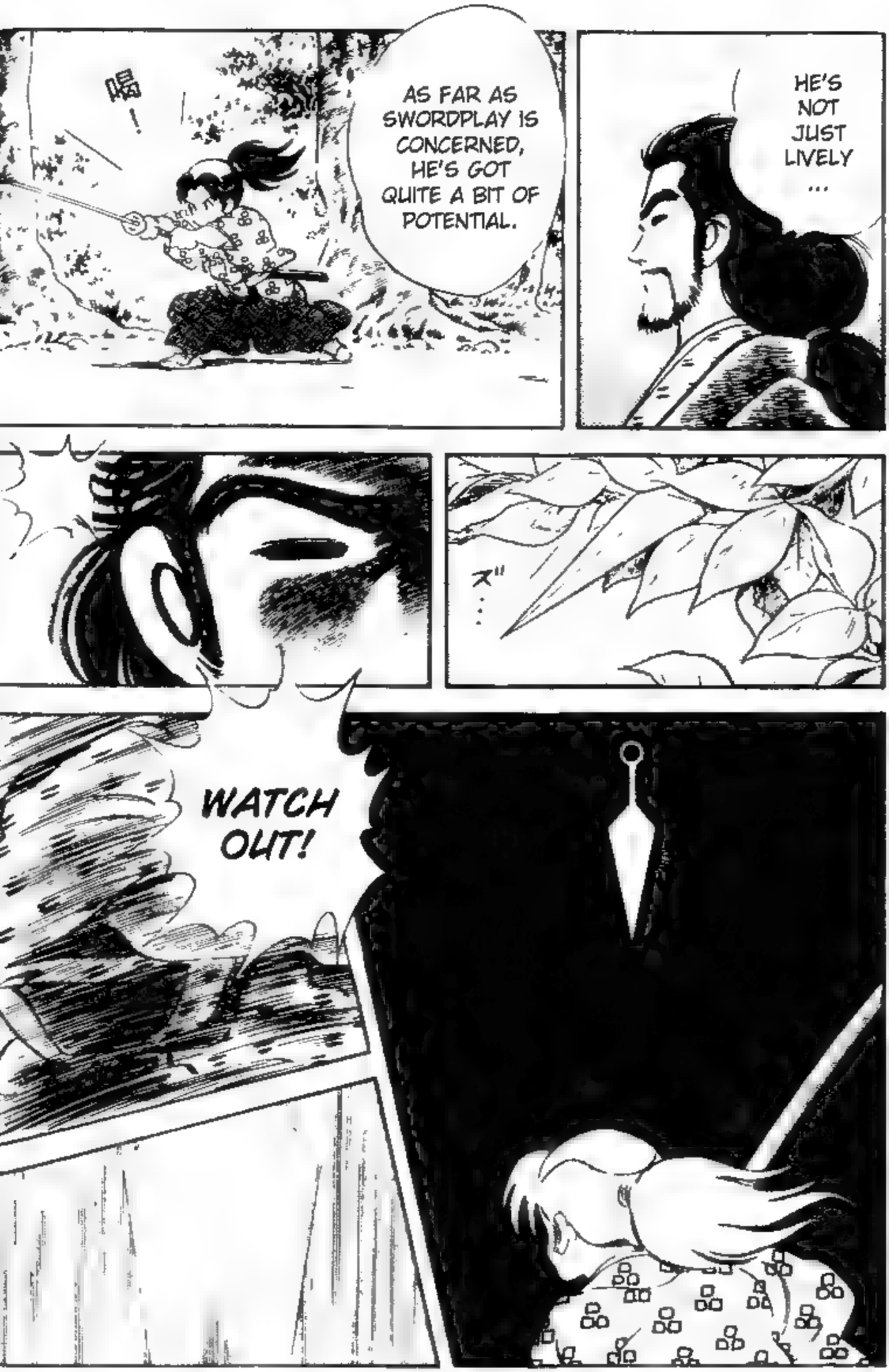

JUST WATCH!
BUT...
IF THERE'S NO DANGER, IT'S POINTLESS.
IF SOMETHING'S WRONG, HE'LL NOTICE IMMEDIATELY!
HE'LL NOTICE IF WE'RE NEARBY.
DO WE HAVE TO BE SO FAR AWAY?
HEY!

NOW!

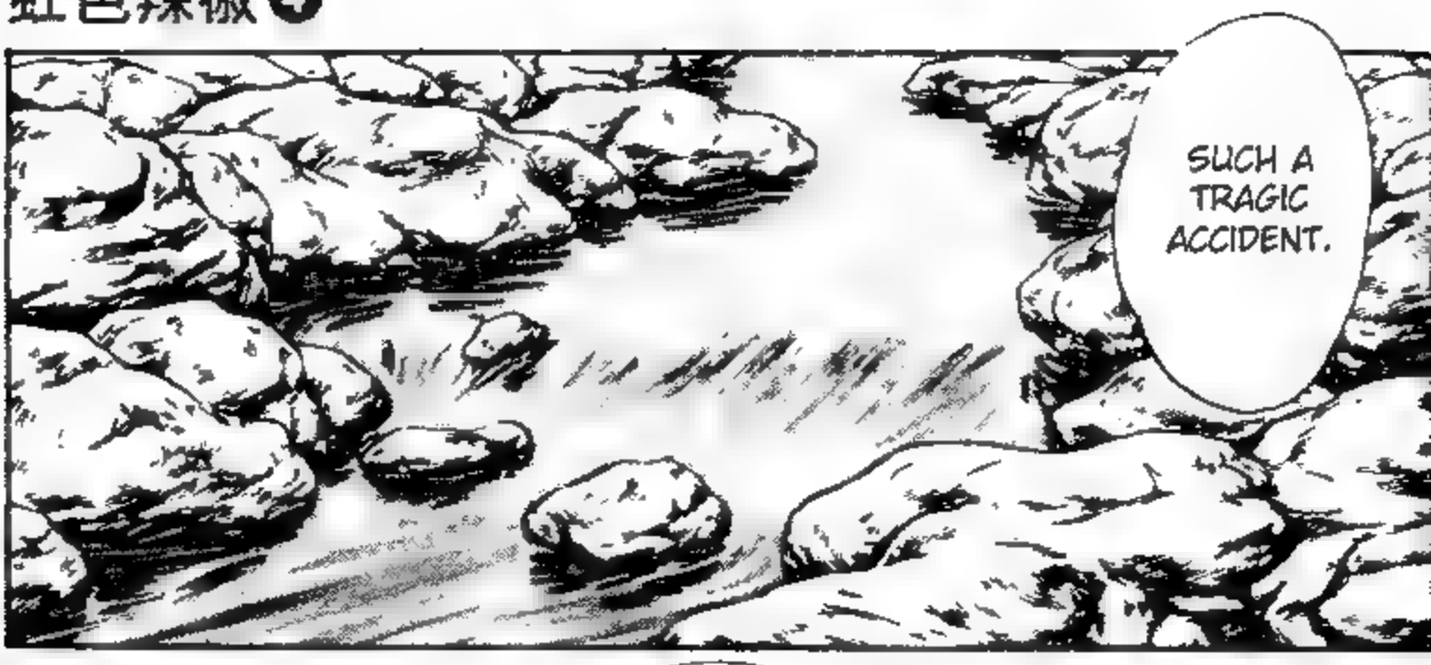



DAD!

WOW!
A REAL SWORD!
HAHA ...
COMPARED TO YOUR LAST ATTEMPT, IT WAS QUITE CHALLENGING!
TOO EASY?
HERE!
THIS IS FOR YOU.
YES, SIR!
BE CAREFUL!
HUM...
SUCH A LIVELY CHILD.
HEY!

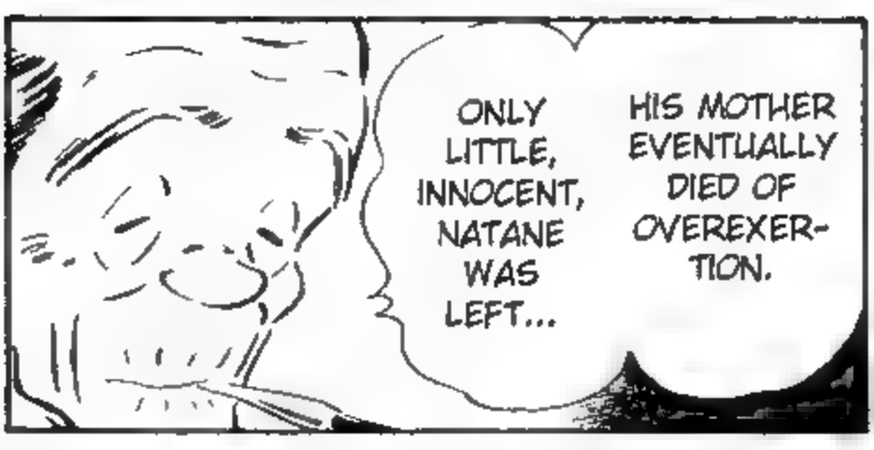

AS FAR AS SWORDPLAY IS CONCERNED, HE'S GOT QUITE A BIT OF POTENTIAL.
HE'S NOT JUST LIVELY ...
WATCH OUT!

THAT WAS SCARY!
OH! IT WAS VERY DANGER-OUS.
THANK YOU, DAD...
DAD?


SUCH A TRAGIC ACCIDENT.

ONE DAY, WITHOUT A WORD, HE LEFT HOME.

THAT LIVELY, HAPPY YOUNG BOY...
HE NEVER WAS QUITE THE SAME AGAIN.


ONLY LITTLE, INNOCENT, NATANE WAS LEFT...
HIS MOTHER EVENTUALLY DIED OF OVEREXER-TION.

UM...

WHAT WAS HIS NAME? THE FATHER?

.....
SHE NEVER MENTIONED IT...
WHEN I CAME, THEY WERE ALREADY LIVING THERE.
SHI-CHIMI ...
YOU ACTUALLY BELIEVE THIS OLD GEEZER?
DON'T YOU REMEM-BER?
ONE OF US ISN'T RELATED TO THE OTHERS.
THE DETAILS SHOULD BE IN NATANE'S MOTHER'S DIARY.
OH!
UH...
BUT...
THAT'S ONLY A THEORY ...

HER MOTHER WROTE EVERYTHING IN THAT DIARY.
IT SHOULD STILL BE IN THE HOUSE.
LET'S GO!
SHICHIMI!
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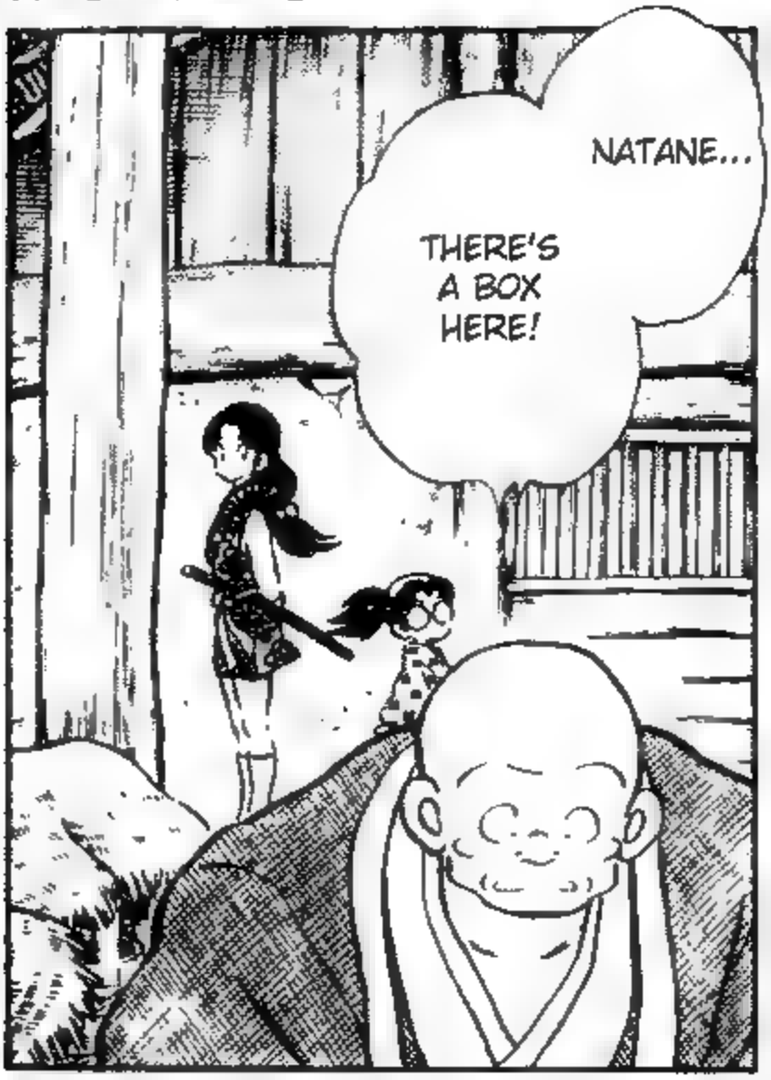
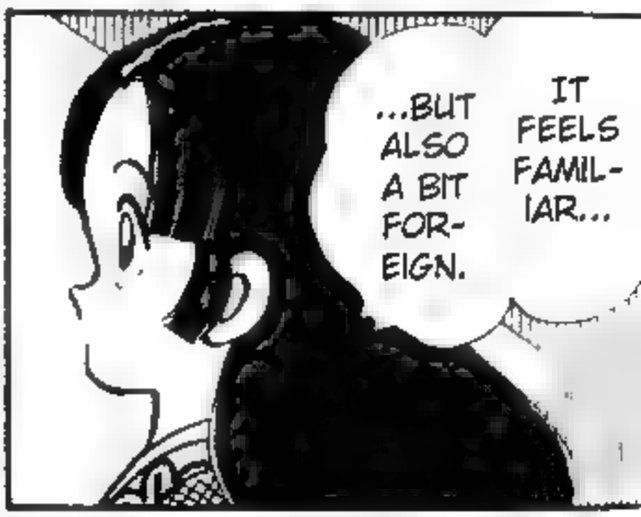
DO YOU ...
REMEM-BER ANY-THING?

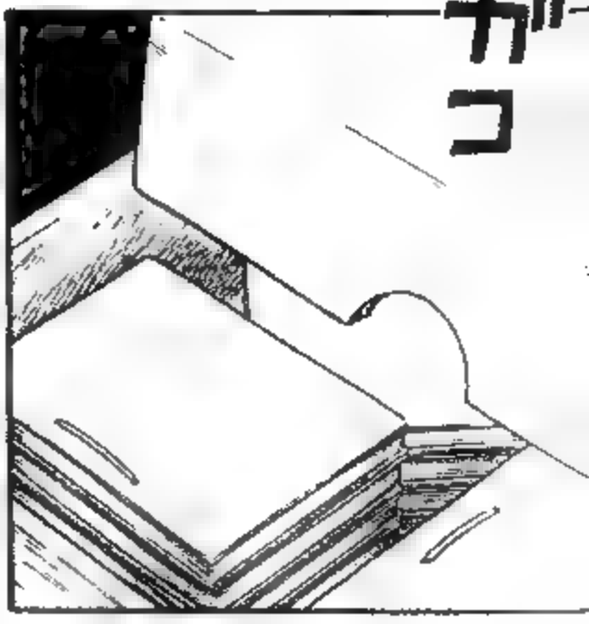

NATANE...
THERE'S A BOX HERE!

UM ...


IT FEELS FAMIL-IAR...
...BUT ALSO A BIT FOR-EIGN.

LET'S OPEN IT.
テテテ‥
WHERE?

STOP RUNNING AROUND UP THERE!
SAN-SHOU
WHAT IS THIS?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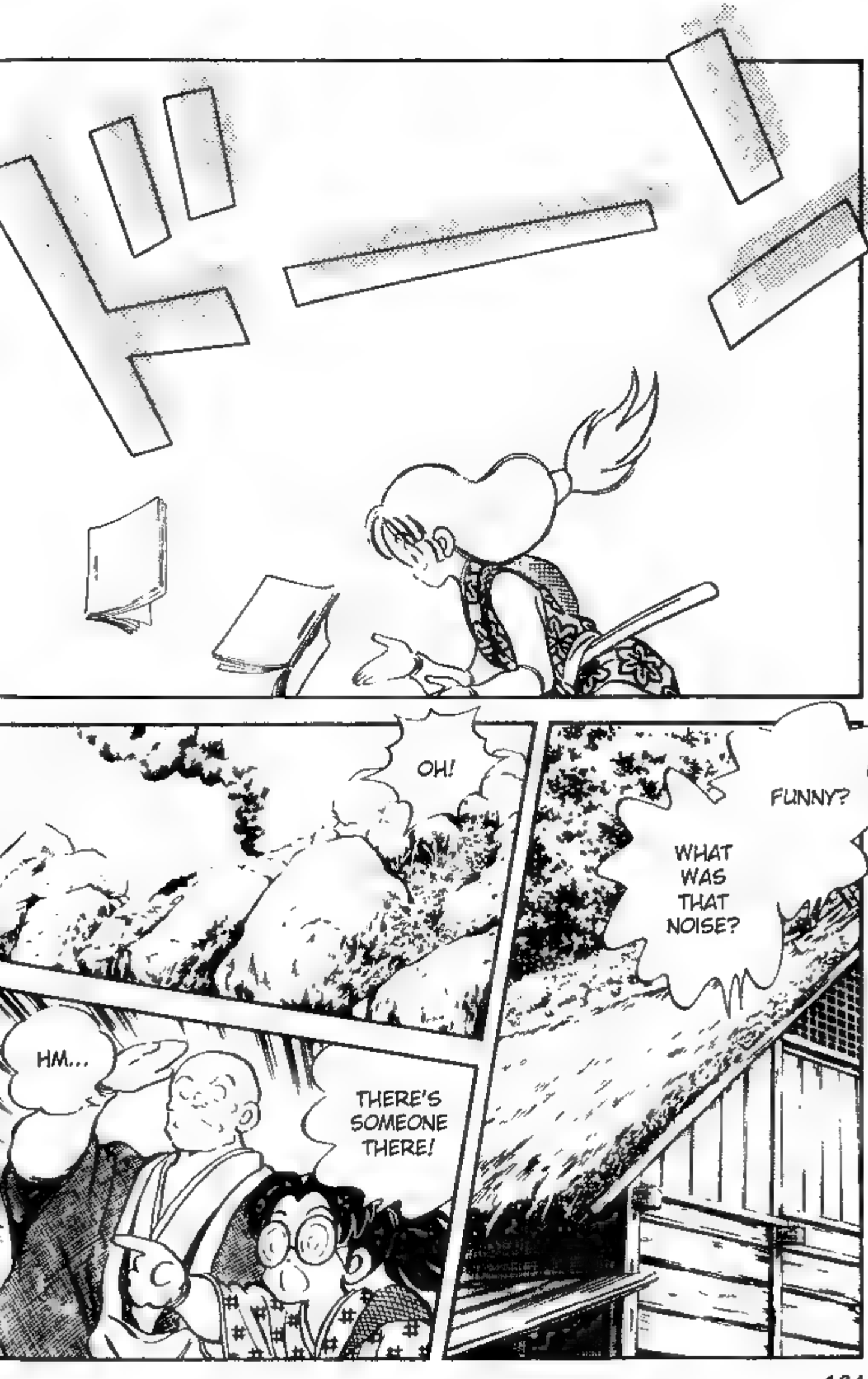
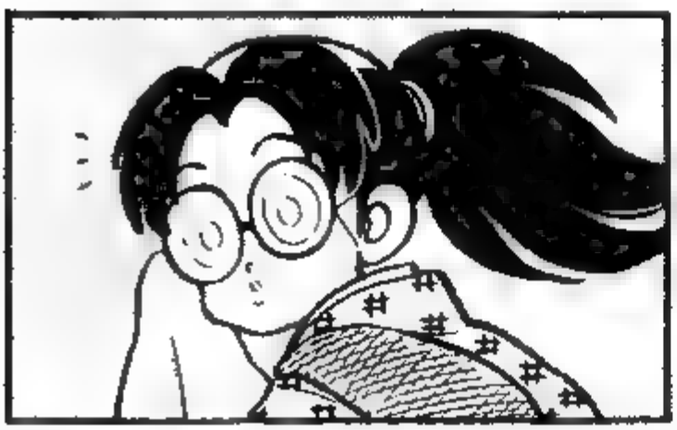
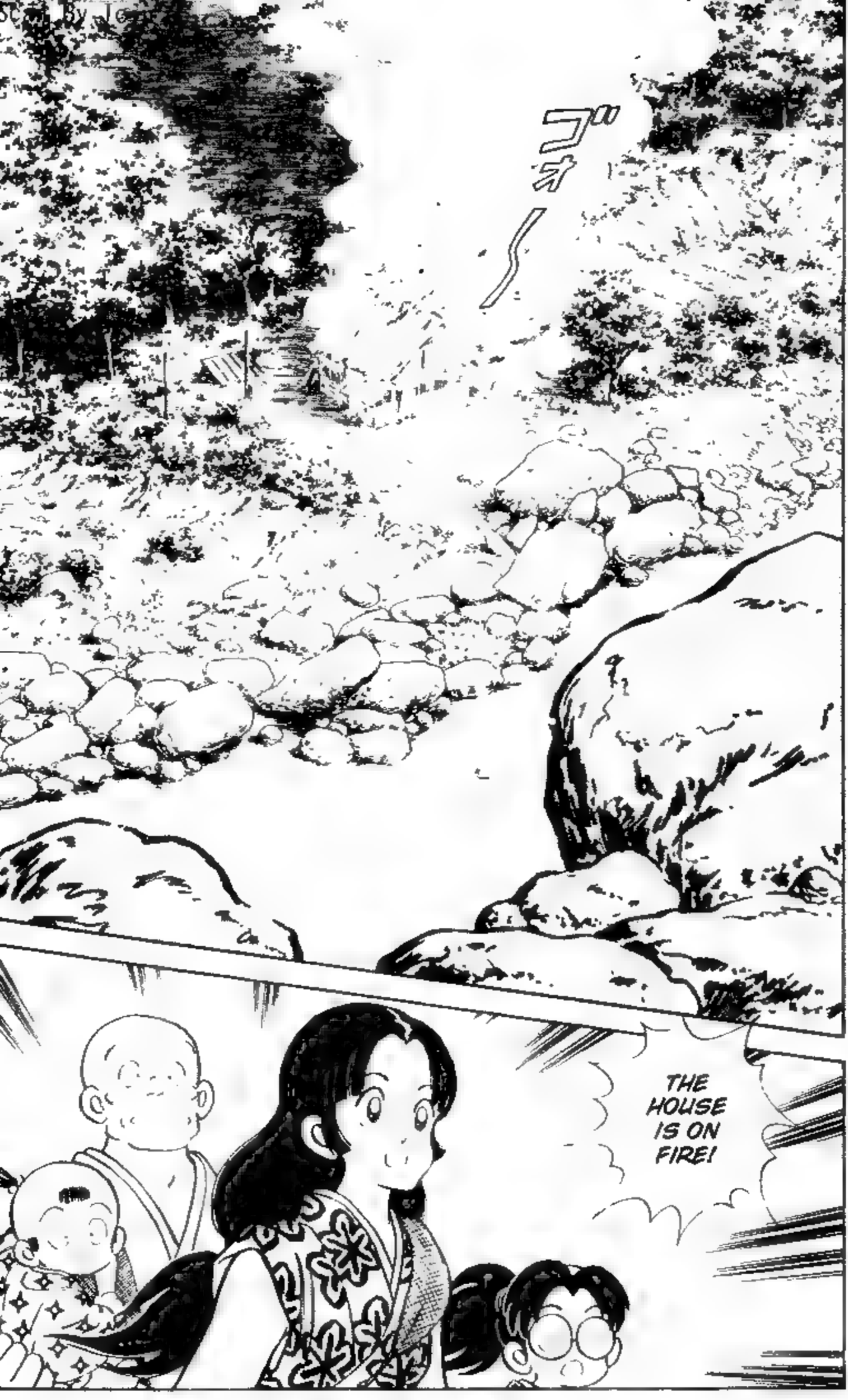

OH!
FUNNY?
WHAT WAS THAT NOISE?
HM...
THERE'S SOMEONE THERE!



ONEE-
SAN!!

WHAT IS
THIS
THING?!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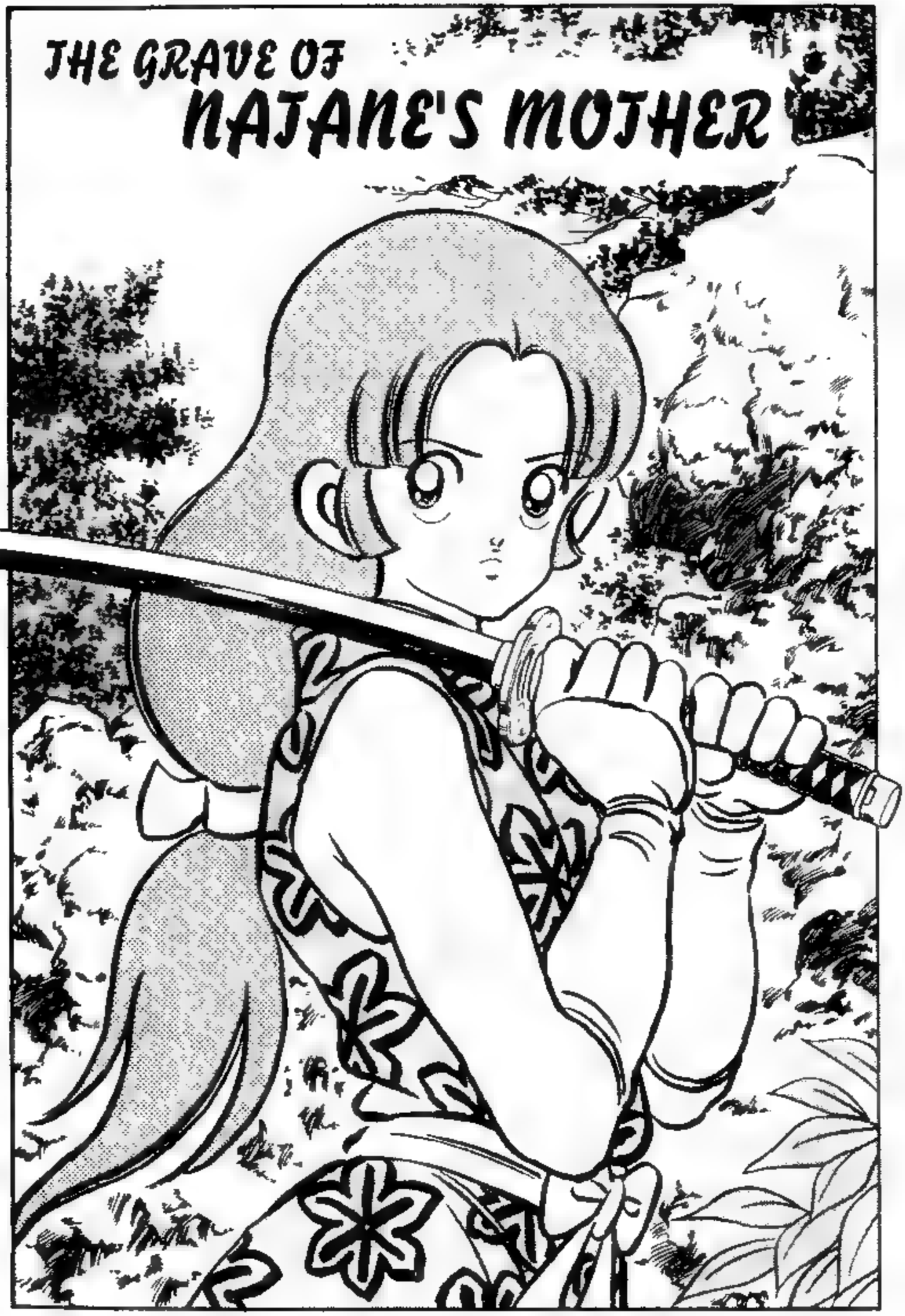
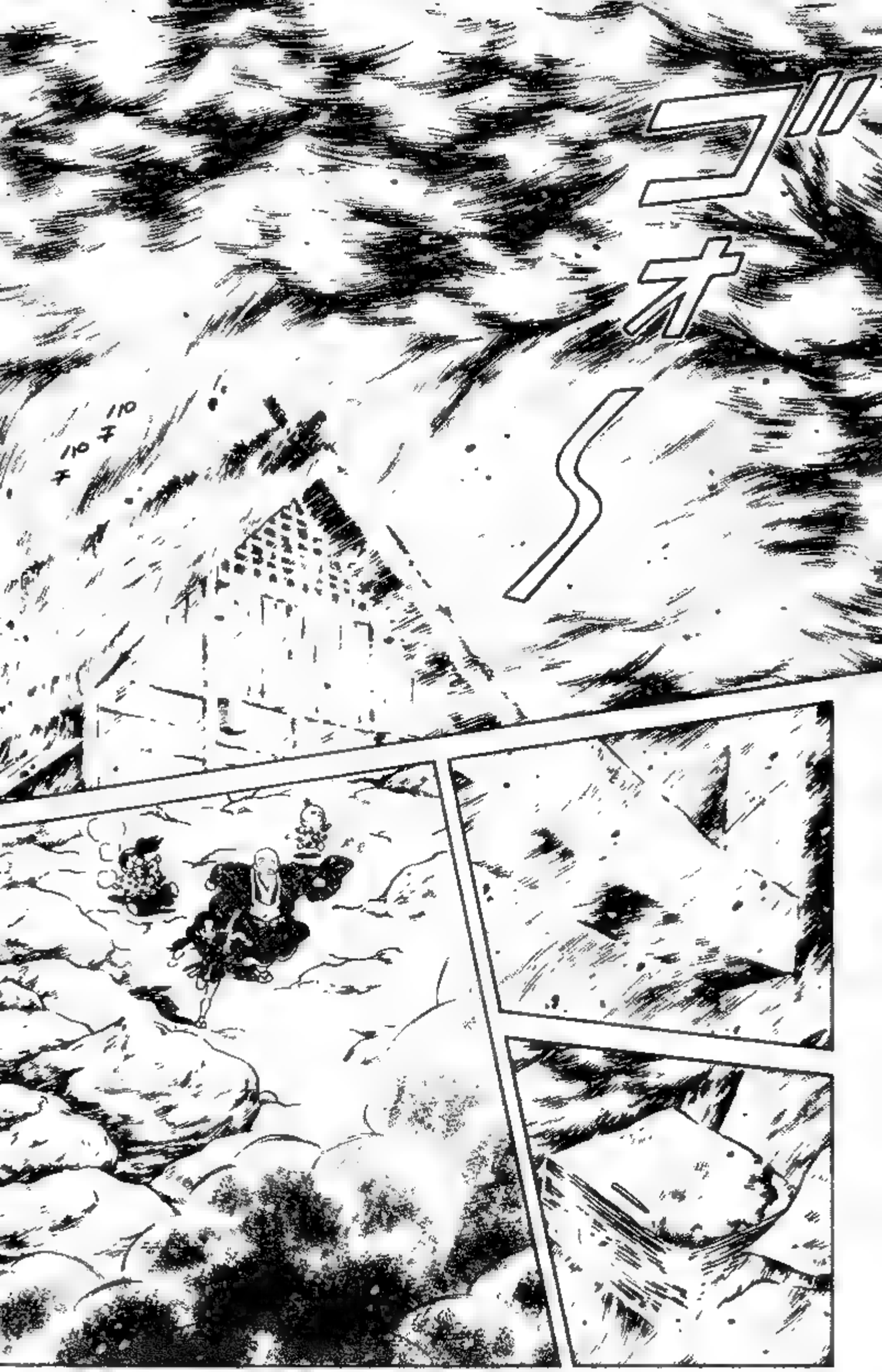
THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE!


THE GRAVE OF
NAJANE'S MOTHER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WHAT'S GOING ON?
HM...

EVEN STRANGER ...HOW COULD IT HAVE FLARED UP SO QUICKLY?
STRANGE. THERE WASN'T EVEN A SPARK WHEN WE LEFT IT.

NOW WE'LL NEVER KNOW IF THAT OLD MAN WAS TELLING THE TRUTH OR NOT...
IN ANY CASE ...

I DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING.

ABOUT WHAT?

SEEING THE HOUSE YOU WERE BORN IN GO UP IN FLAMES? I UNDERSTAND.
NO.

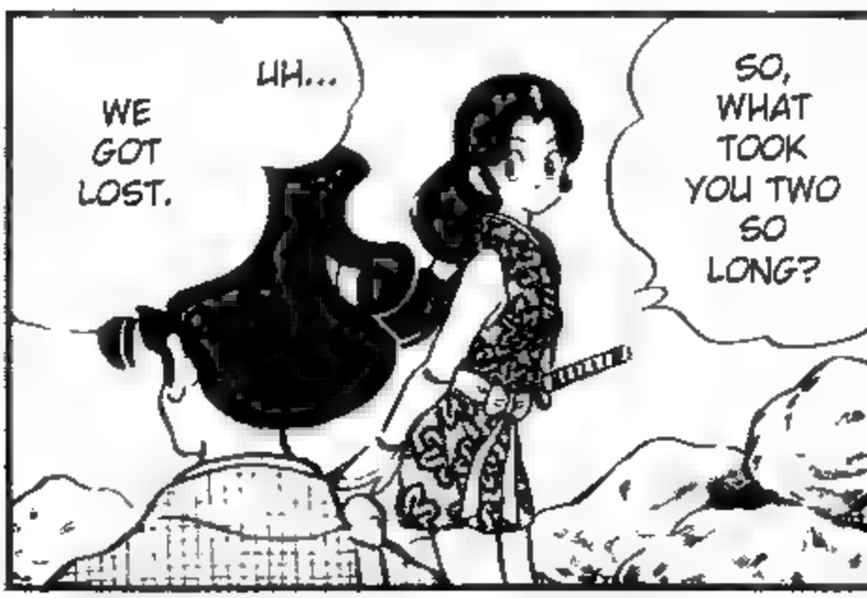
NATANE ...

I FEEL BAD.

BUT I DON'T FEEL A THING.

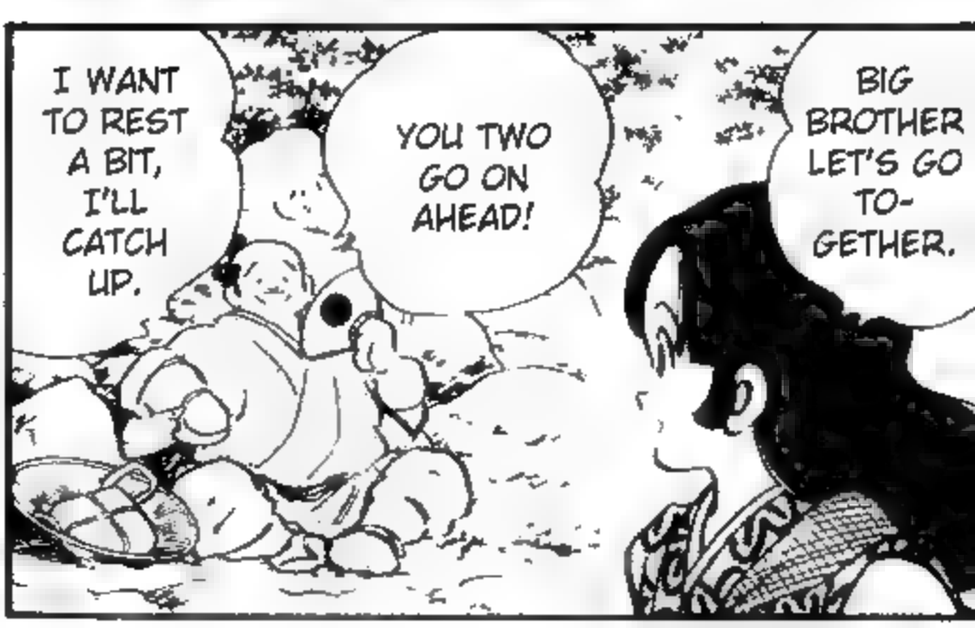
IF I REMEMBERED ANYTHING, I'D PROBABLY BE CRYING...

YES.
I HAVEN'T, WHY NOT INTRODUCE ME?

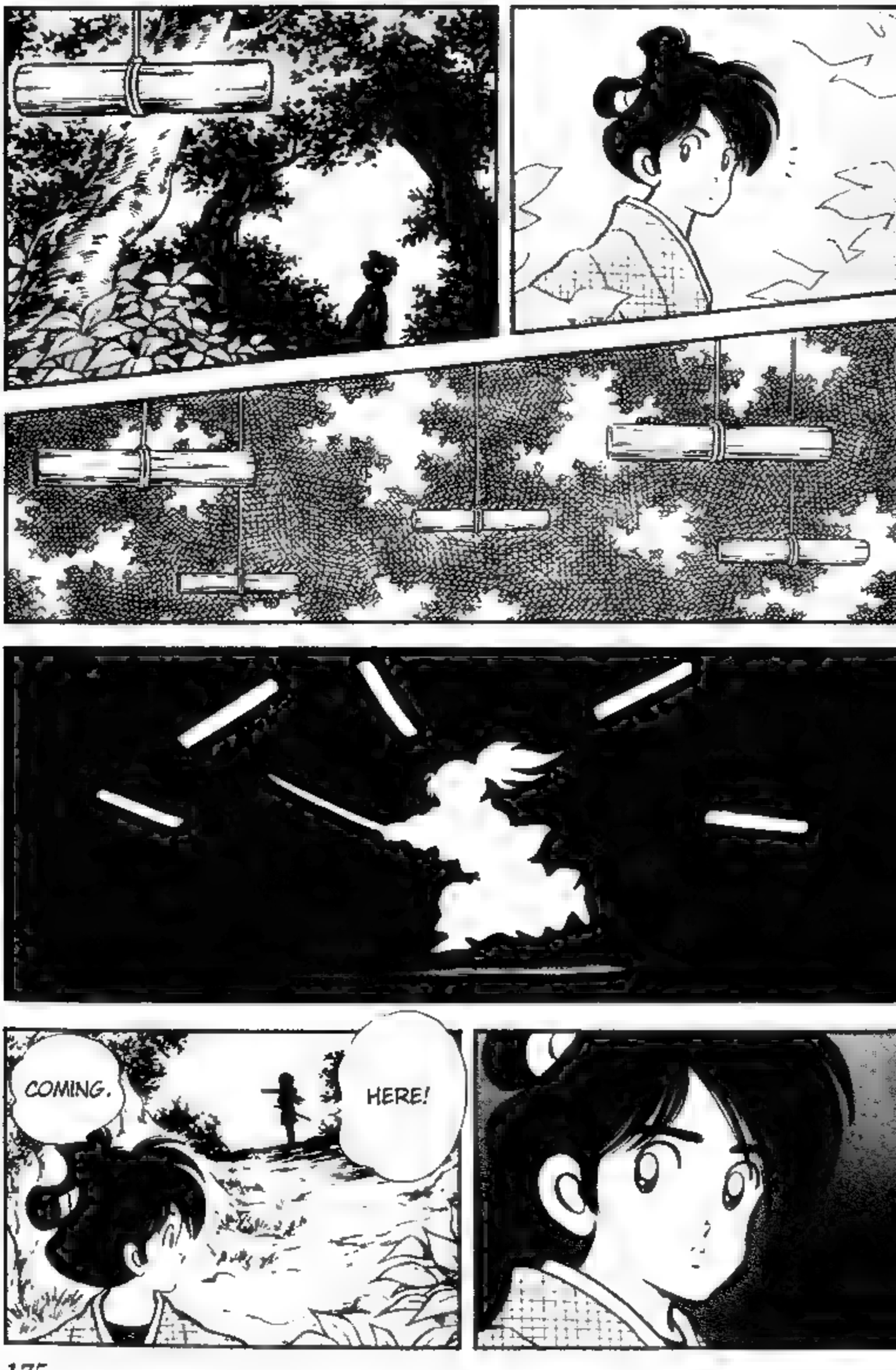

UH...
WE GOT LOST.
SO, WHAT TOOK YOU TWO SO LONG?

DID YOU VISIT YOUR MOTHER YET?

REALLY!


I WANT TO REST A BIT, I'LL CATCH UP.
YOU TWO GO ON AHEAD!
BIG BROTHER LET'S GO TO-GETHER.

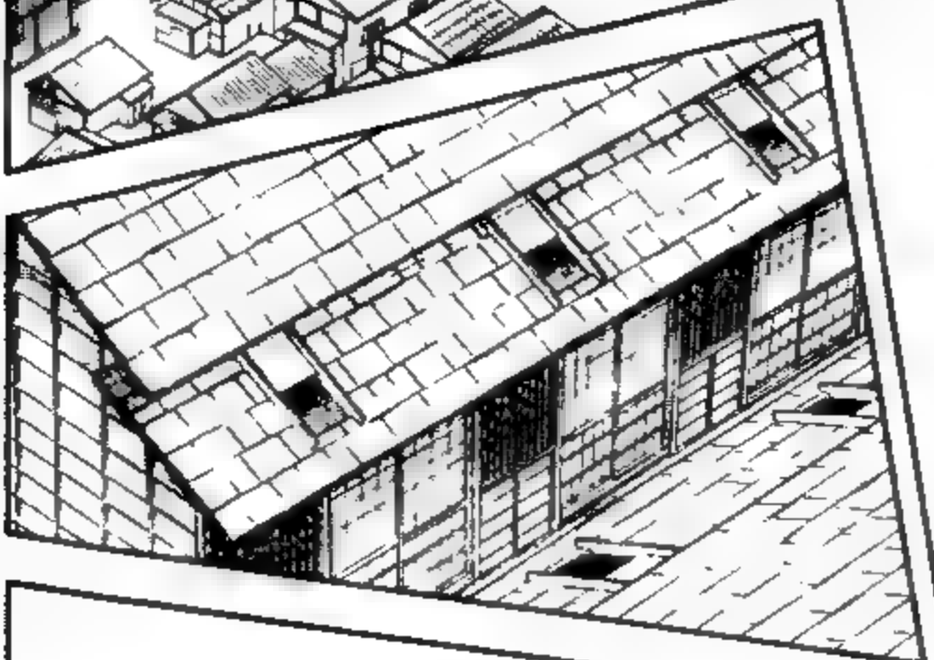
SHICHIMI!
LET'S GO!
WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT
NOTHING.
I DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING, YOU KNOW?


COMING.
HERE!

菜種之母之墓
A HIGH-QUALITY GRAVESTONE.
OUR FATHER MUST BE RICH.
YEAH...
MOTHER, THIS IS SHICHIMI.
HE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MUCH, EH?
HE CAN'T EVEN SWIM!
OH, PLEASE!

JUST FOR ME, HE BROKE INTO JAIL, JUMPED INTO A BURNING HOUSE...
HE'S ALSO FOOLISH ...
THERE. END OF INTRO-DUCTION.
YOUR TURN!
BUT...
OH, PLEASE !
HE REALLY CAN'T SWIM.
STOP TALKING LIKE A FIANCE'!
OH, PLEASE!
PLEASE DON'T WORRY ABOUT HER.
I'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF NATANE FROM NOW ON.
菜種之国

WE'RE NOT KIDS!
IT'S OKAY, C'MON!
EH?
LET'S SURPRISE BIG BROTHER.



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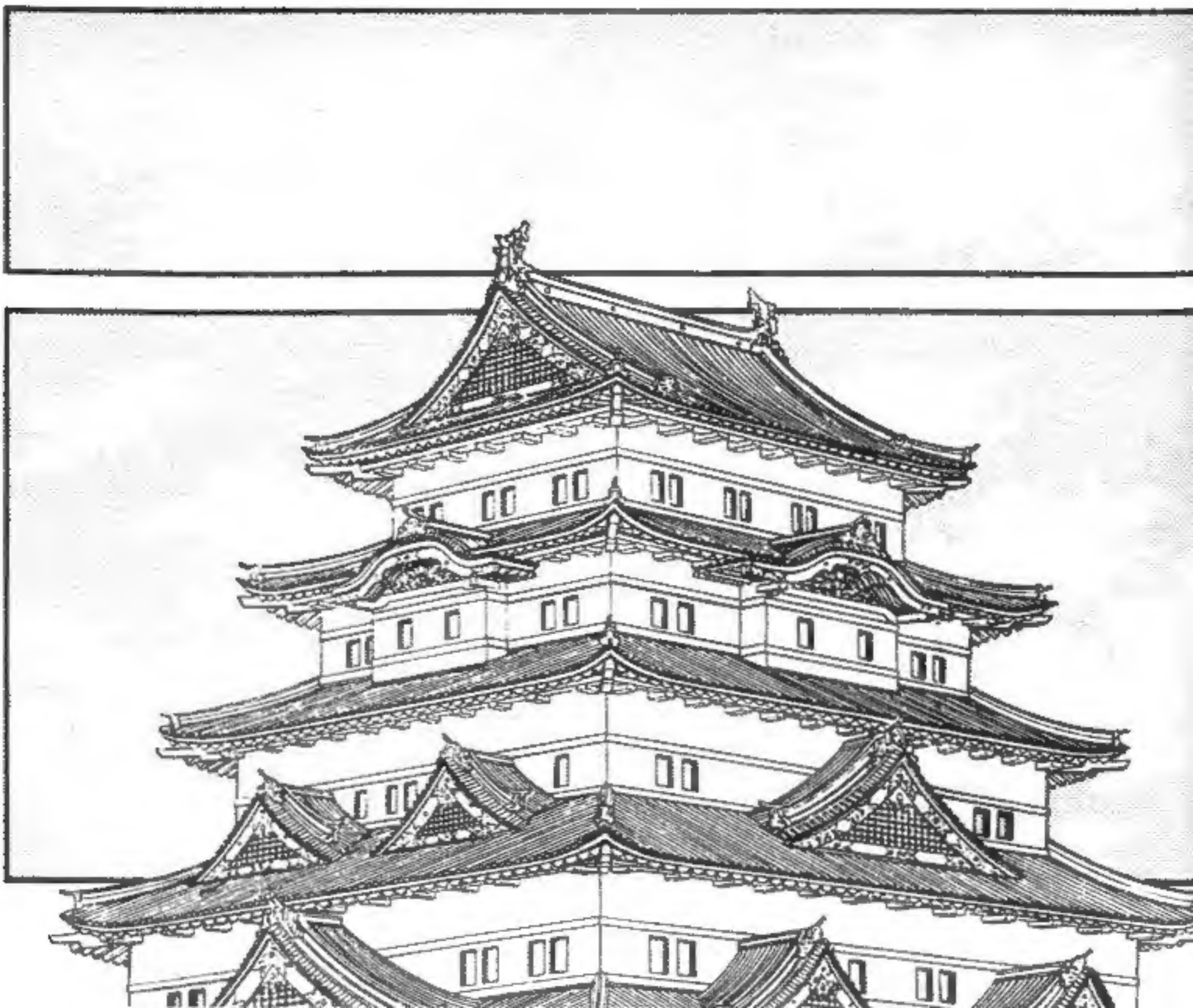
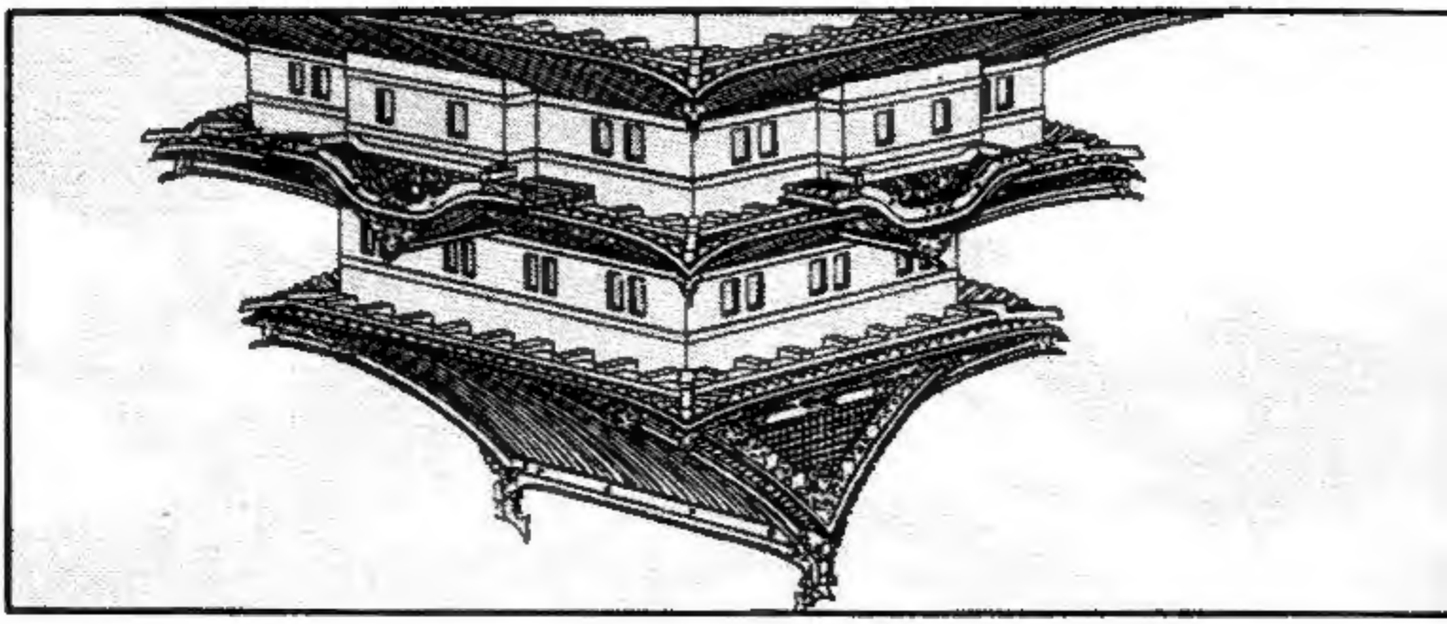
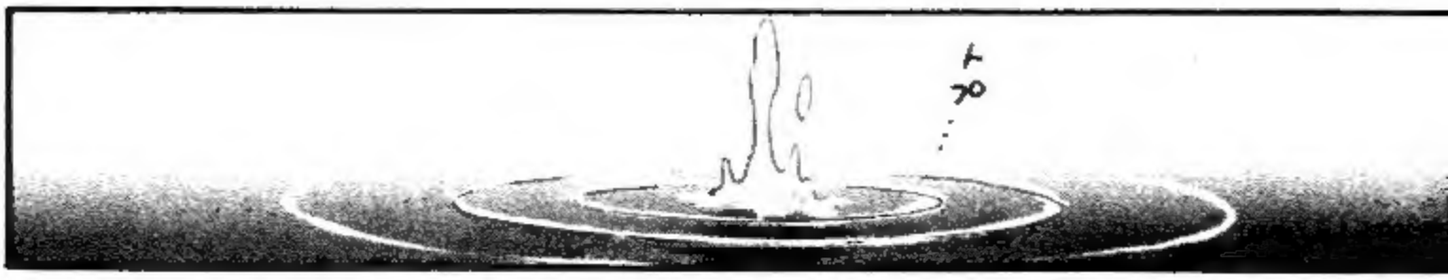
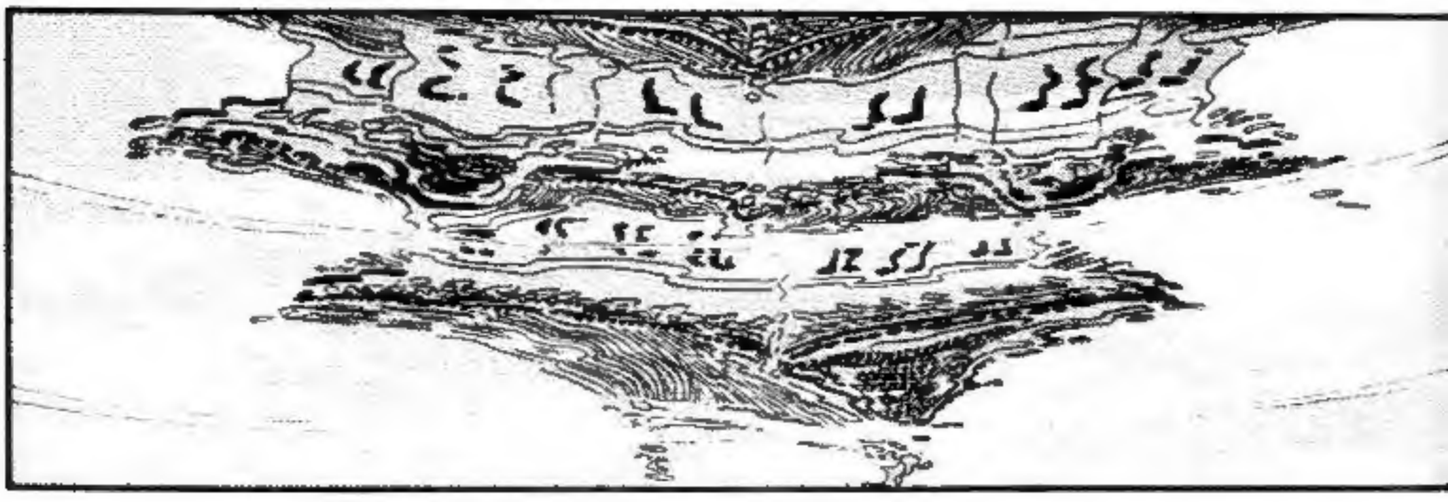
SIGN: "FIRE NO YO KOKORO"

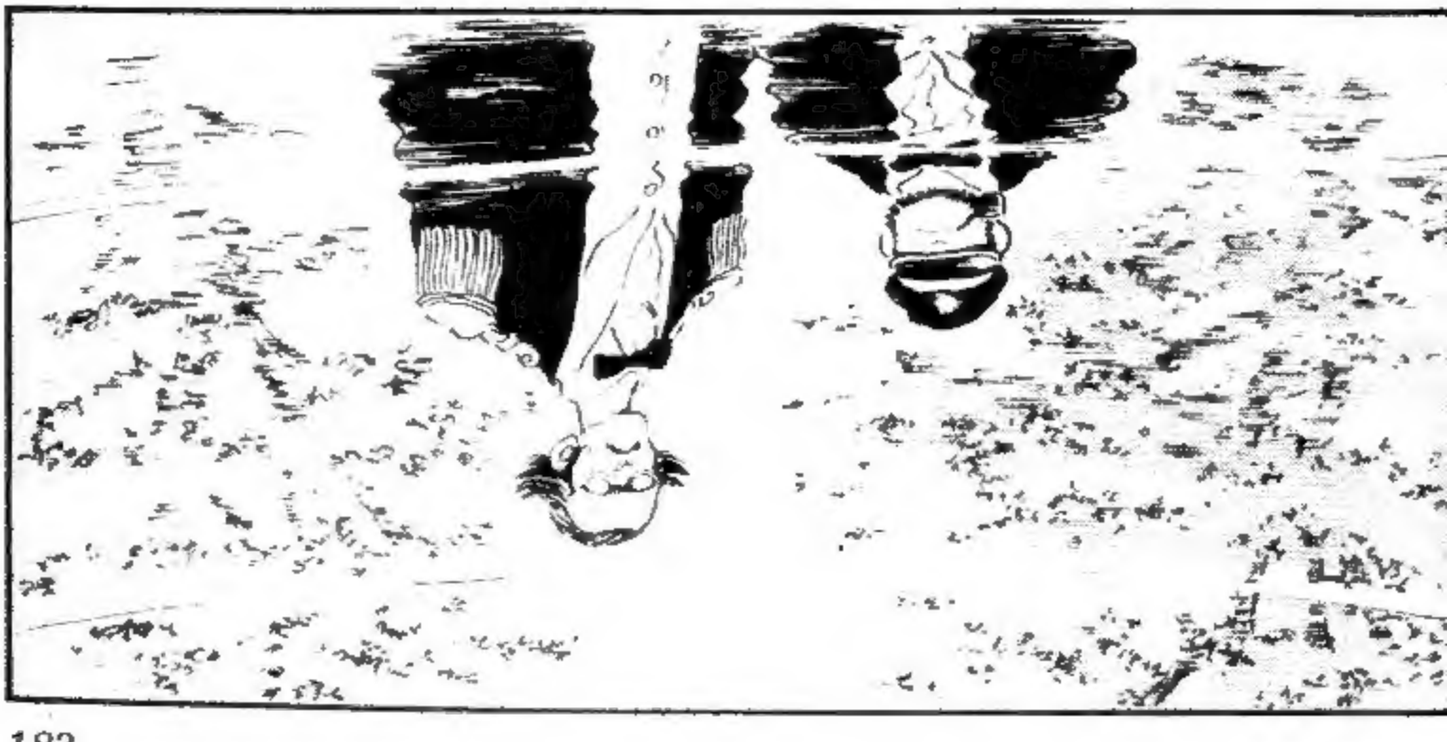


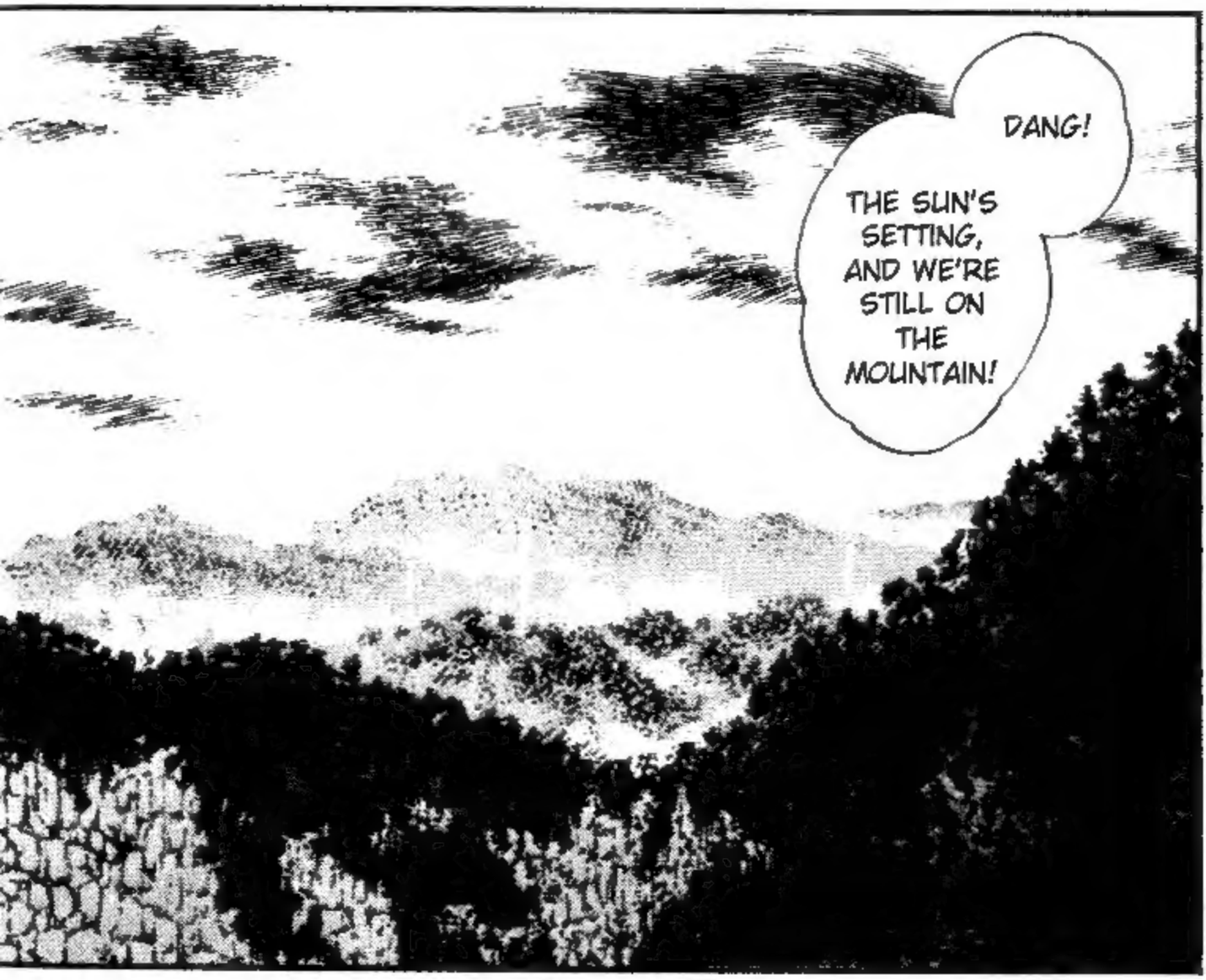
WHAT A PEACEFUL WORLD!
OH...!

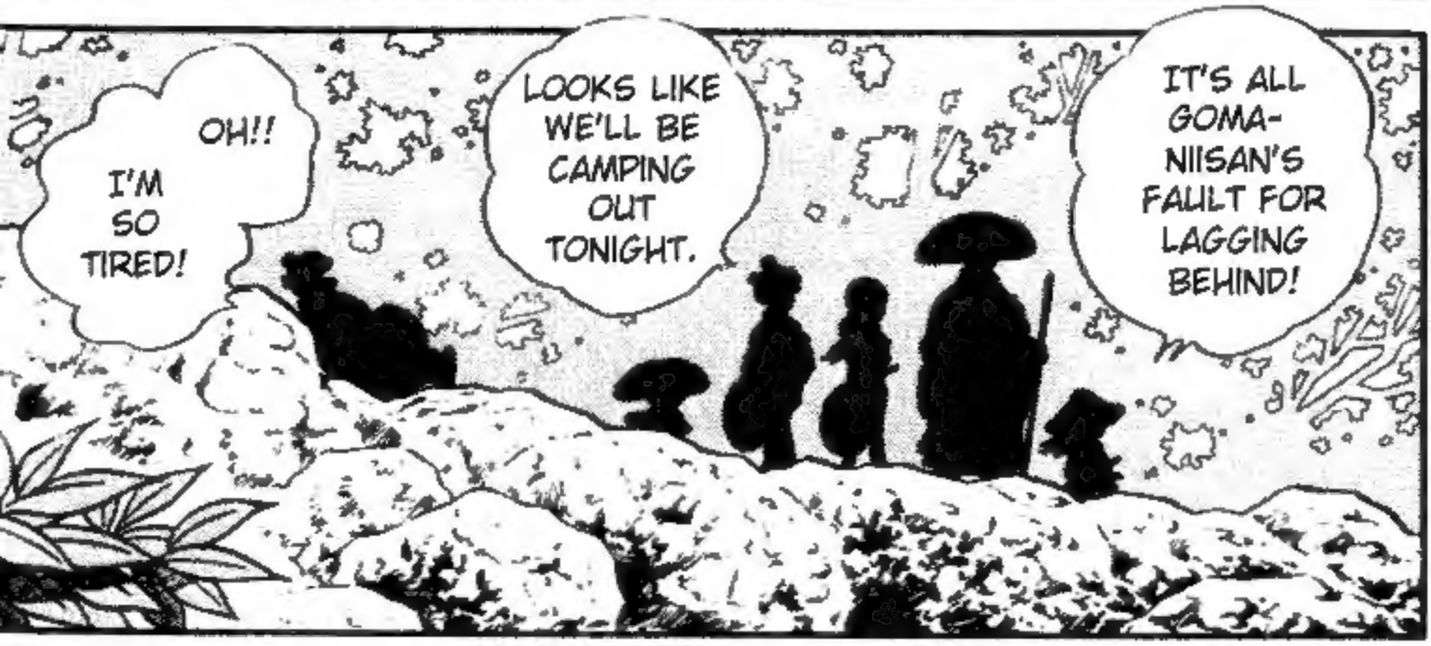


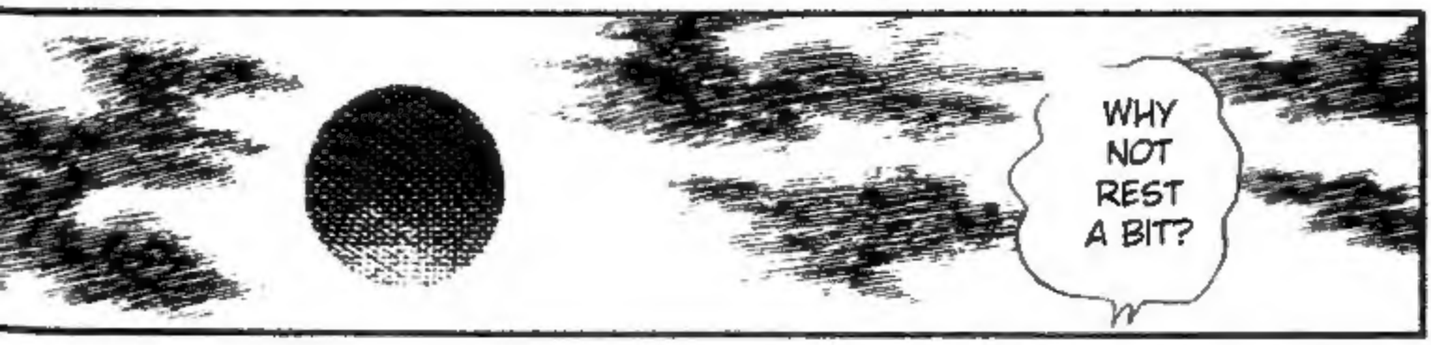







DANG!
THE SUN'S SETTING, AND WE'RE STILL ON THE MOUNTAIN!


OH!! I'M SO TIRED!
LOOKS LIKE WE'LL BE CAMPING OUT TONIGHT.
IT'S ALL GOMA-NIISAN'S FAULT FOR LAGGING BEHIND!


WHY NOT REST A BIT?